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A Visit by the Universe

COMMONWEAL

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Chris Anderson
Raymond A. Schroth

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DARIA DONNELLY on Denis Johnson

ELIZABETH SHANNON on The Gonne-Yeats Letters

JOHN C. CORT on George Higgins

Religious booknotes by the insatiable LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM

Poetry:
NANCY PARKE

Religion & the Constitution

'DO I HAVE TO RENT TO A SATANIST ?'
Stephen L. Carter

THE EDUCATION OF THEODORE URSUS:
A story
E. F. Roberts

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CORRESPONDENCE

Bitter memories

San Francisco, Calif.

To the Editors: Your excellent articles on the Holocaust Museum [June 4] recalled, for me, President Franklin Roosevelt's refusal to allow 937 Jewish refugees to land in Miami when their ship was so close they could see the palm trees. One reason for the refusal was that British intelligence had intercepted a telegram from Gerhardt Regner of the World Jewish Congress asking Rabbi Stephen Wise of New York to intercede with Roosevelt in the case; the telegram was delivered, but two weeks too late.

It's also worth noting that on November 14, 1942, the Catholic bishops of the U.S. issued a public statement on "Victory and Peace," among other things condemning the Nazi persecution of Poles and Jews:

"There has been [in Poland] a murderous assault...a premeditated and systematic extermination of the people of this nation. The same satanic technique is being applied to many other peoples.

"We feel a deep sense of revulsion against the cruel indignities heaped upon the Jews in conquered countries and upon defenseless people not of our faith. Deeply moved by the mass arrests and maltreatment of Jews, we cannot stifle the cry of our conscience."

Too bad the president and the pope did not pay more attention to the bishops!

(MOST REV.) MARK J. HURLEY

The writer is the retired bishop of Santa Rosa, California.

'That sinking feeling'

Douglaston, N.Y.

To the Editors: One can agree with practically every line of your editorial [June 18] on the initial months of the Clinton presidency and still feel much was left out. It's only partially true that Mr. Clnton was elected to "straighten out the economic affairs of the country"; many citizens expect more. And, given the mission of your journal, I thought a review of those months should have noted serious failings.

I voted for Mr. Clinton and I support his programs, but I still believe his character gives cause for some concern. His turnarounds on many campaign promises, without serious explanations, continue to exacerbate the prevalent cynicism toward politics and politicians. Though I'm not a right-to-lifer, I think "abortion on demand" should be subjected to some limitations, and Mr. Clinton's statement that he would sign "any" bill on this topic coming to his desk is disturbing. He showed no great concern over the deaths of twenty-nine children at Waco; he defended the incursion by saying "everyone knew David

Koresh was sexually abusing the compound children," when in fact there is to my knowledge no proof of this. Do you believe that he read the legal essays of Lani Guinier for the first time on the evening before withdrawing her nomination?

In short, Mr. Clinton at least appears to have a problem of playing with the truth. I question whether the country would be in great shape even if all the problems mentioned here and all the others he is addressing were resolved to his satisfaction.

JOE MULHOLLAND

Pushed over the edge

Littleton, Colo.

To the Editors: For months I've intended to write to let you know how much I enjoyed Kenneth Woodward's article on Catholic higher education [April 6]. As the parent of a Catholic college grad, I can say his observations mirrored many of my own. (Isn't that often why we like to read particular articles?) But beyond that, he is an excellent writer and knowledgeable in his field. Let's have more of his work.

Woodward's piece is one among several I consider outstanding: In the May 21 issue, James T. Fisher on Tom Dooley, Raymond Schroth reviewing the Hebblethwaite biography of Paul VI, Woodward again on Anna Quindlen; June 4, Paul Jaskunas on "migrating Anglo-Catholics," the always excellent Abigail McCarthy on Americans abroad, and Frank McConnell on Rush Limbaugh.

All these articles finally moved me to the decision that this treasured magazine needs more of my support than just a subscription. So please find enclosed my application to become a Commonweal Associate.

ROBERT H. WEBER

Rush is right

Los Angeles, Calif.

To the Editors: Frank McConnell ought to watch or listen to Rush Limbaugh at least a few more times ("It's Not Hell, Just Limbaugh," June 4). His critique is so similar to others that have appeared in the "liberal" media that he could have written it without ever hearing Limbaugh. That may be his problem.

(Continued on page 30)

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COMMONWEAL

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STAFF

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Meeting the test

It is not often that Congress leads. It did so in September 1992, when it forced President George Bush—in exchange for funding the supercollider—to accept a nine-month moratorium on U.S. nuclear testing and an end to all nuclear tests by 1996. It did so again last month when it persuaded a wavering President Bill Clinton to forswear testing now, unless and until another country goes first. Does Congress lead wisely?

Of all weapons of mass destruction, nothing else compares with nuclear weapons. Chemical and biological weapons may be terrifying, but they do not pack the overwhelming destructive power of nuclear weapons. The thought of a terrorist on the loose with such a weapon is a nightmare; the thought of an enemy nation—or of ourselves—using its nuclear arsenal is, finally, dumbfounding.

Yet the fact is, nuclear weapons, once developed—particularly on a massive scale by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council—acquired a life of their own. If for no other reason than to deter someone else's use of them, they are here to stay, at least for the foreseeable future. There is a demand for them and willing suppliers: Countries and terrorists alike are scheming and shopping. This gives plausibility to the arguments of nuclear weapons' proponents who question the wisdom of a testing moratorium. As Charles Krauthammer has observed (*Washington Post*, July 16), since it is absurd to pretend that nuclear weapons don't matter, wouldn't it be folly to let ours "rust," to allow them to become unreliable by refusing to test them? This is a fair question, but the issues of proliferation and testing must not be fused. A moratorium on U.S. testing will do nothing to encourage proliferation. On the contrary, it may slow it.

Nuclear tests are no longer needed to verify either the safety or the reliability of the U.S. nuclear arsenal. That is what convinced Congress that further tests are not needed. By simply testing components and using other nonnuclear tests, we already have adequate—and significantly less expensive—means of maintaining the readiness and safety of the U.S. deterrent. Furthermore, the United States now possesses all the materials required for maintaining its nuclear arsenal, as well as for its currently planned future weapons systems. If, over a period of decades, some nuclear components do degrade, they can be refabricated by means of well-tested techniques that do not entail full-scale nuclear testing. In short, there may be something rotten about nuclear weapons but the U.S. arsenal is not rusting—nor will it.

There are inherent dangers in nuclear testing, both material and moral. The physical waste and nuclear fallout produced by such tests are very real; they are a growing concern. The effect on attitudes is even more corrosive. As Frank von Hippel, a physicist and international affairs professor at Princeton, notes, nuclear testing "is taken as a symbol worldwide that nuclear weapons are usable. That undermines the nonproliferation regime in general, and it plays into the argument that the North

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Koreans have been making that our nuclear weapons represent a threat to them" (*Arms Control Today*, July/August 1993).

It is true that by refraining from nuclear testing the United States does not guarantee that other countries will not gain access to nuclear weapons; nor does its unilateral action prevent other countries from testing in the future. But the Clinton decision raises the moral ante against resuming testing, both for ourselves *and* for others. Since the U.S. moratorium went into effect last year, no other country has tested. And, by promising to enter into a comprehensive test ban treaty, as the U.S. and Russia have agreed to do in 1996, the possibility is heightened that countries such as India and Pakistan—nations that have refused to sign on to the Nonproliferation Treaty because it discriminates against nuclear have-nots—might agree to sign a comprehensive test ban.

But even this happy development would not protect the world from the nuclear genie. That will take untiring vigilance, a reduction in the world's store of processed uranium and plutonium, and eventually some breakthrough in developing a truly common security.

Since the end of the Gulf War it has become clear that Iraq not only came close to developing a bomb, but that it skillfully evaded the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency's monitoring strictures, buying whatever parts it needed from willing Western manufacturers. The weaknesses of the IAEA were exposed, almost gleefully, by its critics. As a result, however, the agency has been strengthened. Its recent role in revealing the state of nuclear weapons' development in North Korea, as well as its success in forcing Iraq to allow intrusive monitoring, both indicate the IAEA's growing stature and competency. These need further strengthening. More financing would help. The IAEA's entire yearly budget remains a paltry $60 million, far below the cost of a single U.S. nuclear test ($100 million).

Nuclear testing ought to be a thing of the past. The need for nuclear vigilance will never be. It is the price of human freedom and survival in a post-Hiroshima age.

NOTEBOOK

A VISIT BY THE UNIVERSE

BRIEF BUT NICE

I report here a couple of experiences that more or less fit one of the definitions of "epiphany" in the *American Heritage Dictionary*: "A comprehension or perception of reality by means of a sudden intuitive realization." The first such experience happened maybe fifteen years ago. I sat on a dock projecting from an island off Portland, Maine, and watched the tide move in. I didn't really see "the tide," of course; I saw the water slowly cover a flat white rock sitting in the mud. Not an experience to make the heart race, but somehow interesting.

Then I began to reflect not on the phenomenon itself but on the history of our understanding of it. Seeing the tide, I thought about the first human being who recognized its existence and predictability; then about the hundreds of generations during which men and women accommodated themselves to the action of the tide, without knowing or caring what caused it; about the slow accumulation of knowledge and the leaps of insight necessary before anyone connected the motion of the moon with the movement of the waters; and the further period during which skills of observation and modes of thinking developed that made it possible to group the tides with other regularities of nature as examples of a "law," as effects of a "force" that could be named: Gravity.

Nothing about this experience added to the sum of human knowledge, or even of my knowledge; it was a repackaging rather than a discovery. But there was something pleasant about it and maybe useful, adding a smidgen to my state of awareness. It's something one can do deliberately; you could contemplate your checkbook, for example, or a bayonet, or toilet paper (the technology!), or *Roget's Thesaurus*.

The second epiphany was not of my doing and I don't think it can be practiced, exactly. It happened as I was walking down Columbus Avenue in Manhattan toward a deli, when I chanced to look up at the sky. There aren't great reaches of sky available at that point—more than in midtown, yes, a lot less than in Montana; but, it seems, enough. It was pale blue, with enough streaks of wispy clouds to be interesting. The earth below wasn't earth but sidewalk and pavement, familiarly dotted with oddments of trash (newspapers, flyers, Chinese menus), well peopled with walkers of all ages and conditions, dressed for the ratrace or the jogging track, scurrying for the bus stop, ambling back from shopping, alone or in pairs, gossiping ("I think she's pregnant") or griping ("you wouldn't believe what he said to me").

Not the ideal place or moment for an epiphany, but it happened. "Happened" is right; I'm not notably meditative or prayerful, and this came uninvited. I looked *through* the sky, or so it seemed; I was conscious of the universe. Immensity came to Columbus Avenue. It was not crushing or threatening; rather, reassuring, making me feel at home and befriended. I was a little sorry for all of us, so tied to the street and the sidewalk, so occupied with getting and spending. The experience put itself into words: "We should all be worshiping!" Don't worry, I didn't say the words: Saint Paul I'm not. I doubt that anyone eyeing me at the moment would have seen any sign that anything worthy of remark was going on in my head.

As a lived experience this revelation, or whatever it was, lasted maybe twenty seconds. It's lasted some weeks as a live memory. I'm writing this now partly because I want it to stay in memory, so that I can pay it a visit from time to time. I know, of course, that five seconds after it happened I might have stepped on an exploding manhole, or been conked from above by a deflating blimp (these things happen). So my epiphany doesn't prove, even to me, that the universe really is friendly, or full of meaning. I don't care. I still like Aquinas's now unfashionable five proofs, but I like my epiphany (theophany?) better.

ROBERT G. HOYT

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PEOPLE, RITUALS, TREES

AGING BECOMES THEM

ON BEING QUIETED

The summer before he died, Grandfather McRea sat in the tall grass of the blueberry patch while my daughter and I gleaned the last berries. It was one of those perfect July days, clear and still. We were working in the shadow of the hemlock and cedar Grandfather left standing when he logged the place thirty years ago, but the meadow was full of light, the valley brilliant. Now and then a horse would nicker in the near distance.

I had never known Grandfather to sit down like that. Even in his eighties he could do the work of three men. But weakened then by the bone cancer that killed him, he leaned back against a fence post and talked while we worked, clasping his knees like a boy, pausing now and then to look out at the valley; and the light poured down on the meadow, and Maggie and I moved among the cool leaves.

I hadn't expected to take such pleasure in the company of a dying man. The calm I felt in his presence was so deep it had the effect somehow of luxury. There was sadness, too, that final trip, as we prepared for Grandfather's dying, but more than that, unexpectedly, spreading all around us, seeping into us, was a sense of peace and forgetfulness and long, slow releasing. Being with him was like taking the waters at some secret spa.

Later that week on the other side of the state, in Spokane, I had the same sense of silence and release taking Grandma Gottwig to visit the Gottwig graves. The sun was hot on the broad lawns of the cemetery, so I kept Grandma at the fringe, in the shadow of ponderosa, guiding her around sprinkler heads. The air was dry, aromatic. At Aunt Lettie's grave Grandma told the story again: cleaning the house one day, top to bottom—dusting and polishing and folding—and then the fire in the attic that night, flames shooting into the hallway, Lettie dead in the smoke, my six-year-old mother thrown out the upper window, nothing but charred timbers in the morning, blackened furniture. "I don't know," Grandma always says. "A clean house just didn't seem important after that."

But what I recall most vividly is not the telling of the story but the green of the grass and the stillness of the air and the deep pleasure I felt again, for the second time that week. Being with Grandma was as therapeutic as a morning in the garden or a long afternoon in the library. The lawns swept up the hill, the sun shone down, and Grandma and I made our way among the markers, talking of the big fire.

The rest of the vacation I did my usual babbling about the year's struggles and accomplishments. With everyone else I can't stop trying to justify and impress, my words getting away from me, straining and sticky. The pleasure I felt with Grandfather and Grandma Gottwig came from knowing I had nothing to prove. With them my triumphs and failures flattened out in a larger perspective, fading into some simpler, more elemental plot. I remember thinking, with sudden clarity: here I am, picking blueberries with my daughter, and Grandfather is sitting in the grass. Here I am, helping Grandma Gottwig up the hill, and the sun is all around us. Silences were possible, and in those silences a kind of openness, a kind of exhaling.

Sometimes I have this feeling serving as a Eucharistic Minister at the 5:00 P.M. Saturday Mass. There are five or six of us usually. We process in with the priest, singing, and bow at the altar. After the homily we bring up the wine and hosts, stand behind the priest during the Lamb of God, and after taking Communion ourselves, pick up a plate or cup and move to our assigned position (there's a chart in the back room with x's and o's to show where we should be). If I'm giving the bread, I lift each host, say "the Body of Christ," and place it either on the palm or the tongue. If I'm giving the wine, I say "the Blood of Christ," offer the cup, then wipe the rim with a purificator, twisting the stem counter-clockwise with my right hand. Depending on my position around the altar I can serve up to fifty people. When I'm finished I go to the sanctuary to help drink the remaining wine and lock up the leftover hosts, then we process back out after the announcements, two by two, singing the final hymn.

What's occasionally so satisfying about these rituals is their silence and the scriptedness. I speak rarely, usually with others, and the words I speak are not my own. I say what I am supposed to say, stand where I am supposed to stand, in exactly the same way, week after week, inventing none of it, never improvising.

There's a sense of participation. I move around in the dark church, the organ playing, children fussing in the back pews, the smell of candles in the dusk, occasionally nodding to another member of the team, quietly purposeful. All that matters is my presence—all that matters is that someone is performing my task. It could be anyone. But it's me. In a sense the ceremony is entirely impersonal, apart from what I've done or failed to do that day. Yet in spite of that, or because of it maybe, I now and then feel a kind of personal fulfillment at the Mass that I never feel in the life I invent and direct.

Most of the members of the team are older, in their sixties and seventies, though there is no pulling of rank. We don't know each other outside of Mass, yet there's a camaraderie among us now that we've been working together a couple of years. Our greetings are genuine: Ruth in her gray suit, Mildred in sweat pants, Ray in his polyester sports jackets, smelling of aftershave, shoes shined, silver hair combed back behind his hearing aid.

It seems a more-or-less secular feeling, I should say, even indulgent. It's not that I have spiritual insights usually but simply that I come away at ease. The ritual and the community are a balm, physically pleasurable in a way, reassuring.

From our house I can take a long walk through the forest to a stand of old-growth fir. It's about five or six miles away, in

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one of the upper northern draws. I pack a lunch and take Max and part of the pleasure comes from the rhythm of long walking—the subsiding of other thoughts and the beginning of the slower, deeper thinking, the emergence of the old themes and images. Max trots on ahead, nosing in the brush. The familiar scenes come into view—the stream, the glimpse of the valley, the little grove of maple.

There's been a lot of hyperbole lately about old-growth forests, and in reaction some of the vested interests have questioned the aesthetic categories. What I feel is not awe but calm. What I feel moving into the old trees is very close to the calm and release and deepening I felt with Grandfather McRae in the blueberries and Grandma Gottwig at the graves, with Ruth and Mildred and Ray standing around the altar.

The huge firs have something of the dwarfing, humbling effect of a starry sky. I feel small among them, clarified by their indifferences. Their growth is so slow, their movement so gradual and massive, they seem fixed and stationary, given, and in the midst of that slowness and solidity I am slowed, too, quieted.

I always eat my lunch on a footbridge overlooking a ravine, my feet dangling. In front of me a giant snag points out of maple and oak, the twisted stem of a fir cracked off in a storm or broken under its own enormous weight. Light filters down in the gap. I sit and eat and look at the snag's scarred wood and enjoy even the absence of bird song, the dusky quiet among the trunks. Deer fern and vanilla leaf grow from the bank of the stream beneath me, where Max comes bounding up, muddy and delighted.

There are hemlock etched on Grandfather's gravestone, and there are hemlock growing in the forest behind the cemetery where he is buried, and I think about those trees now, eating my sandwich, dangling my feet over the bridge. Light filters through the gap, the snag twists out of the maple, and I am thinking of Grandfather buried on the hill, slower even than the trees, as slow as the earth. CHRIS ANDERSON

Chris Anderson teaches English at Oregon State University in Corvallis. His Edge Effects: Notes from an Oregon Forest *will be published this fall by the University of Iowa Press.*

'I'M GONNA WASH THAT MAN...'

LET'S GO TO THE TEXT

THE GOSPEL WITHOUT SEX

"A man had two children. The younger of them said...." Sound familiar? Yes and no.

Or: "Once there was a rich individual who dressed in purple and linen and feasted every day...."

Or: Jesus and the disciples meet "someone who had been blind from birth...."

The first time we met these people—perhaps years ago—they were men. Characters in the New Testament, often vividly etched by a combination of the Gospel context, Jesus' words, and our own imaginations. But priests and parishioners, particularly on college campuses, are meeting them now through a lectionary published by a Washington D.C., group—called Priests for Equality—as vague, indeterminate, unsexed "someones," "persons," and "individuals"; and the sons have become "children." And God the Father....

In Ash Wednesday's Gospel (Matthew 6), Jesus tells us to pray and fast in secret and the Father who sees us in secret will reward us. But the word Father—either here or in the "Our Father"—has not been allowed to stand in this lectionary. It has been transmogrified into "Abba God," a concocted combination of an Aramaic term Jesus uses once in the Garden of Gethsemane (meaning "Father," or "Papa") and "God." "Your Abba God...will reward you." Meanwhile, the "Son of Man," one of the most mysterious and complex characters in both the Old and New Testaments, a title which again and again Jesus seems to apply to himself, has become the "Promised One"—a translation which Joseph Fitzmyer, S.J., editor of the *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, assures me has no foundation in scholarship. Finally, in perhaps the weirdest depersonalization, the woman taken in adultery has become the person taken in adultery! Are we to visualize this person as a man? If so, the valid feminist insight into the story—that a male-dominated religious power structure would literally execute a woman for this sin—is lost.

The lectionary's operating criterion seems to be the determination to eliminate masculine words wherever they appear, with little regard for what the original authors of the texts wanted to achieve. The assumption seems to be that the sounds of "he," "man," "son," or "Father" are so offensive to one part of the congregation that no part of the congregation may be allowed to hear them, even though those sounds may have originally come from the voice and imagination of Jesus.

Let's be clear. This is not a case against giving women power in the church. If I were pope, I'd name thirty women cardinals (I'd change the Code of Canon Law so they need not be ordained) and begin the process that would lead to women's ordination. Nor is this an argument against adapting the *liturgy* so that both women and men are comfortable with the prayers. God is not masculine, God is spirit—neither He nor She, yet She as well as He. We might enrich both our public and private prayer by dwelling on God's femininity as well as on our own. And many a neutral term in the Gospels can easily be translated as "brothers and sisters" or "men and women." For example, in "Let your light shine before men" (Matthew 5:16), the Greek *anthropos* could just as well be "people" or "human beings." But some translations making the rounds are not concerned with striking a balance between respect for the text and the feelings of women at odds with the "patriarchal" world the Scriptures portray. They want it all.

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What is gained? Some satisfaction for some women (and probably some men) in the congregation. What is lost? The power of the original stories, which, like all stories, are not about "the individual in question" (originally a man born blind in John 9) or a "crippled one" but concrete, particular men or women whom the evangelists see when they tell the stories and we are supposed to see when we hear them. Some women—like Jairus's daughter and the persistent woman with the hemorrhage—retain their sex in these rewrites. So should the men. In Luke's story where the resurrected Jesus appears to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, for example, Luke mentions Jesus' name only once, when he first joins the two men fleeing Jerusalem. The other twelve references are to Jesus as "he," clearly to underline the fact that we the readers know Jesus' identity, while the travelers, up to the last minute, do not. But the rewriters can't abide "he" and bombard us with Jesus' name again and again, violating both good theology and good prose.

Also lost is theological precision. Jesus' self-understanding as one intimately related to the Father is one of the central messages of the New Testament. To stick in "Abba God" every time Father appears is to hit the congregation with a mystifying sound—more out of "Star Trek" than the evangelists—and to undermine the original author's design. Is Jesus' concept of God culturally conditioned? Of course. Can we go beyond it? Sure. Have we a right to monkey with his terminology? The same right we have to tamper with the texts of Aristotle, Plato, Shakespeare, and Tolstoy. To shave the beard off the Michelangelo's Creator in the Sistine Chapel. Or change Handel's "Messiah" to "And this person shall reign for ever and ever."

Underlying these rewrites is not just the obviously valid idea that women have historically been oppressed by institutionalized Christianity and that the Scriptures have been used sometimes as an instrument of that oppression—for example, in denying women ordination—but also the notion that the New Testament itself is oppressive. But once we start seeing the basic texts of our religion as obstacles to our belief, we are in deeper trouble than we realize.

In keeping with *Commonweal*'s usual schedule, only one issue is published each month during July and August. The next issue will be dated September 10.

Culturally conditioned, yes. If so, the preacher's job is to place the text in its historical context, explain the social and sexual relationships of first-century Palestine, and make the original words relevant to Brooklyn and Bosnia. Many in today's campus congregations, who can usually fulfill their religion requirements without reading the New Testament, will have virtually no knowledge of Scripture other than what they hear read to them in church—all the more reason to present them with an authentic, not an amateurish, or ideological, translation of the text. Meanwhile, preachers should not presume that their listeners are too dumb to make distinctions between what words mean in one context and in another.

A faculty friend told me the story of the nineteenth-century abolitionist preacher who took his scissors and clipped all the references to slavery out of his Bible, as if that would further the cause of racial justice. We can try the same tactic, and we'll end up with a wishy-washy religion that eliminates anything from the gospel message that makes us feel ill at ease, anything odd or foreign or difficult to understand. Since there is no sound scriptural argument against women's ordination, the Scripture, truly understood, must be the best weapon for the liberation of women and men alike. The danger is that by the year 2000 this kind of movement for "equality" will have so unsexed the liberating power of the Gospels that we won't have women priests. We'll have the same old male priests who will stand at the altar, raise their hands, and intone: "The Force be with you."

RAYMOND A. SCHROTH

Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., a male person, is a journalism professor at Loyola University in New Orleans.

OF SEVERAL MINDS David R. Carlin, Jr.

THEY'VE STOLEN MY NAME

ANY OTHER SUGGESTIONS?

In my younger days I did not hesitate for a moment to describe myself as a liberal, which in those far-off times meant two things: (a) substantively, it meant you were in favor of the underdog, e.g., working people, the poor, blacks; (b) procedurally, it meant you were in favor of civil liberties, e.g., freedom to speak and organize, the right to a fair trial.

Philosophically that old liberalism was based on something like Kant's categorical imperative: Always treat humanity, whether in yourself or in another, as an end, never simply as a means. Or in more popular language: Treat human beings as persons, never simply as things. Or in more exalted language: Always remember that the human person is a being of absolute and nearly infinite value. From this philosophical premise it followed that we should get rid of all unnecessary social inequality (the substantive half of the liberal program) and that we should get rid of all unnecessary impediments to freedom (the procedural half of the program).

So defined, liberalism was not incompatible with Christianity. Just the

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opposite, in fact, for it was Christianity that had first taught the absolute and nearly infinite value of the individual human person. Liberalism could be seen as a secularized version of Christian anthropology.

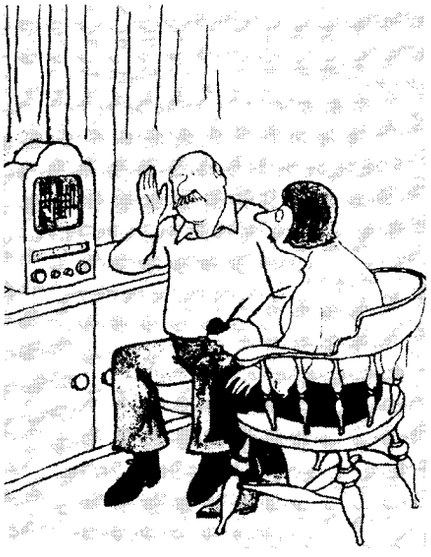
For me this easy identification with liberalism changed forever on the day *Roe* v. *Wade* was announced in January, 1973, and I saw liberals greet the decision with jubilation. I could appreciate that the right to abortion was consistent, at least at first glance, with the personal freedom component of the liberal agenda; and I could even appreciate that an argument might be made that this new right was a boon for underdogs, in this case women, and therefore consistent with the substantive component of the liberal agenda. But no matter how hard I tried (and I did try), I could not see how abortion was consistent with the philosophical foundation of liberalism. If humans are of absolute and nearly infinite value, how can we abort them with justice? And it did not help very much to be told that the victim of abortion was a "potential" human, not an "actual" one. Even granting this, the potential human remained a thing of immense value; and how could aborting it be justified for anything less than the gravest reasons?

Nor was my mind put at ease when I was told that since only women could become pregnant, then only women were entitled to have opinions on abortion. If so, then the Christian-Kantian universalism that I had imagined to lie at the heart of liberalism was out the window. I found it difficult to understand how a liberal could believe that gender trumped humanity.

Still I continued to call myself a liberal. Only now I amended the description a bit, saying, "Well, I'm basically a liberal, but I don't agree on the abortion issue." But that was awkward.

Eventually I stumbled across Daniel Bell's description of himself as a socialist in economics, a liberal in politics, and a conservative in culture. I liked that. Of course I wasn't a socialist; but neither for that matter was Bell, at least not according to the usual meaning of that word. Omitting the socialist part of the description, then, I took to calling myself "a political liberal and a cultural conservative." There, now. That felt just right.

I remained content with that self-description for a long time; but I am content no longer. The description works only as long as culture and politics remain relatively segregated from one another. Then you can be both a liberal and a conservative without violating the logical principle of contradiction. But when cultural issues invade politics, when political decisions become decisions about cultural questions, then the adjectival compromise has broken down.



"This is the voice of Moderation. I wouldn't go so far as to say we have actually seized *the radio station."*

For quite some time now this is in fact what has been happening; that is, culture and politics have been merging, and to be a political liberal has increasingly involved supporting the liberal cultural agenda. But with the coming of the Clinton administration, the floodgates have opened, and today American politics is inundated with cultural issues.

Clinton's program includes both traditional political subject matter (e.g., deficit reduction, health care for all) and cultural subject matter (e.g., gays in the military, public funding for abortion); and it can no longer be said, as it could not so long ago, that the cultural issues are a sideshow, while the traditional political issues are the main event. I suspect that Clinton personally is far more interested in health care and the economy than he is in gay rights and abortion; I even suspect that there must be days when he wishes that some of his "friends" in the gay rights and abortion movements would go jump off a cliff. But whatever his personal feelings, he and his administration are committed to the liberal cultural agenda; and in the public mind his administration is equally defined by gay rights and abortion as by deficit reduction and health care.

But cultural liberalism isn't confined to Washington or to the two issues of gay rights and abortion. For a long time it has been reaching, for instance, into policy decisions about education, which are still chiefly made outside of Washington. To be a liberal in education nowadays means that you are in favor of multiculturalism. Granted, this is a vague concept, which means ten different things to ten different people. Often it means multiracialism, which involves elevating one's racial identity above our common human identity. Sometimes it means that persons of diverse cultural ancestry should focus on their own particular cultural heritages, abandoning the search for a common human culture. But whatever it means, it is almost always incompatible with the Kantian universalism that underlay the old liberalism. To those of us who remember the lessons we learned when being schooled in that old liberalism, muticulturalism is the most illiberal thing in the world, reminiscent of such earlier twentieth-century notions as "proletarian science" and (worse still) "Aryan science."

I don't know how much the Clinton administration will stimulate the economy, but it is almost certain to stimulate cultural liberalism in the field of education, both by policy and by example.

So what shall people like me call ourselves? Certainly not conservatives, because even though we are in agreement with many of the conservatives on cultural issues, we are still out of step with them on traditional political and economic issues.

Shall we call ourselves "true liberals" and argue that we have a better right to the label than those who have recently usurped it? I admit to some sympathy

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with this approach, but I am doubtful it can succeed. About a hundred years ago Herbert Spencer and other champions of laissez-faire argued, with good reason, that they were the true liberals and that the new welfare state liberals were traitors. But words have a life of their own, and Spencer, it turned out, was fighting for a lost verbal cause.

Or shall we admit that we are neoconservatives? No, for that means we are really conservatives, and Republican conservatives at that. Most of us are still not ready to turn Republican, and we hope that the grace of final perseverance will keep us from that sad eventuality.

For the present, it seems, we'll just have to sit here like a character from a fairy tale, waiting for some angelic spirit to reveal to us our true name. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS John Garvey

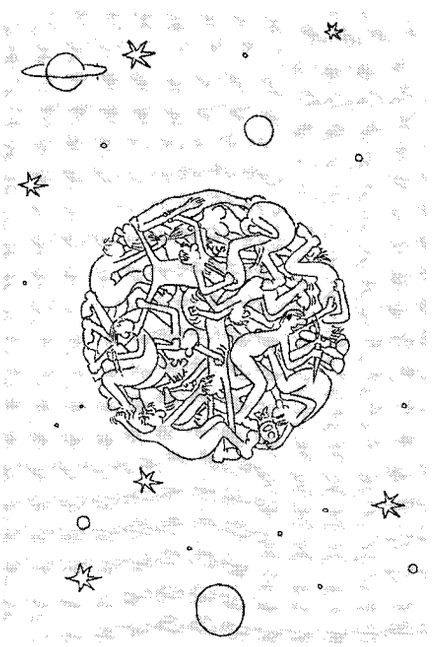
DEMOCRACY & ITS LIMITS

IT'S WONDERFUL; IT'S NOT ENOUGH

An essay in the summer issue of *Foreign Affairs* (excerpted in the *New York Times*, June 6) suggests that the fundamental sources of conflict during our time will not involve political ideology or economics, but culture. The author, Samuel P. Huntington, argues that interactions between the "seven or eight major civilizations" will shape the future, now that the world has moved beyond the old cold-war categories. Huntington identifies these as "Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, and possibly African civilizations." He says that the differences among them are basic and centuries old; that as the world becomes smaller and interactions among people increase, the awareness of these differences will intensify; that local identities erode because of economic and social change, and religion moves in to fill the void.

Some of this can be questioned: self-consciousness about civilization and culture itself is a relatively modern phenomenon, for instance, at least where it takes a nationalist form. And it could also be argued that the argument was, in some sense, about culture all along—the culture of the post-Enlightenment West with its doctrine of romantic nationalism and secularism versus earlier imperial Western, Islamic, and Orthodox cultures. But this doesn't really change the central thesis, which is probably correct. It is certainly tempting to look at something like the bombing of the World Trade Towers and the more recent foiled attempt to bomb a number of other New York City targets—products of what is becoming known, too simply, as "Islamic fundamentalism"—and see confirmation of the idea that the basic differences do exist at this level.

Huntington makes a number of suggestions: the West should see to its own interests by "promoting greater cooperation



and unity in its own civilization, particularly between its European and North American components," bringing into its orbit those Eastern European and Latin American cultures whose values are close to the West, encouraging international institutions that "reflect and legitimate Western interests and values," limiting the military expansion of "Confucian and Islamic civilizations," while exploiting the differences and conflicts between them.

Some of this could be seriously disputed, but not here. What concerns me is Huntington's belief that the West "will have to accommodate to these non-Western modern civilizations, whose power approaches that of the West but whose values and interests differ significantly from those of the West. This will require the West to develop a much more profound understanding of the basic religious and philosophical assumptions underlying other civilizations and the ways in which people in those civilizations see their interests. It will require an effort to identify elements of commonality among Western and other civilizations."

If this is what we need, we are in trouble. There is, first of all, the astonishing religious illiteracy of the West—an illiteracy that is almost as ignorant of Christianity (certainly in its historical dimension) as it is of Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, or Hinduism. The inability of the *New York Times*'s editorialists to understand religious objections to euthanasia or abortion (objections with which they are not required to agree—they should be expected only not to distort or caricature them) does not offer us reason to be confident that we will see any sensitivity to Islamic or Orthodox or Hindu concerns, or any real understanding of them.

In the July 15 *New York Review of Books*, William Pfaff writes of "a fundamental inability of governments responsive to popular opinion to deal with problems whose consequences lie in the future." This has been demonstrated, he says, in Yugoslavia, where action to halt aggression would be risky, dangerous, and would therefore be unpopular. The sad fact is that governments which are most effective at mobilizing their people are those headed by people like Slobodan

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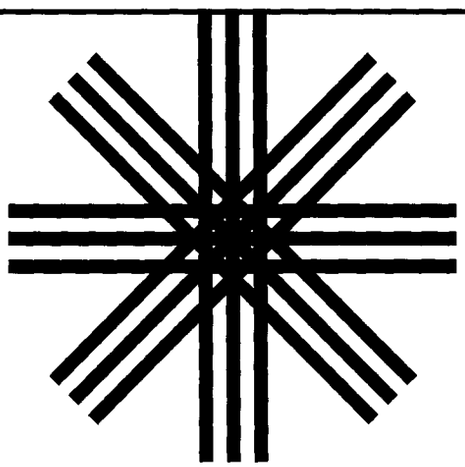
Milosevic, Saddam Hussein, and Hitler. Through the invocation of national myths, past grievances, and the hope of future glory they stir up support, with the help of censorship, the suppression of dissent, and other nondemocratic (but very effective) means.

Here Pfaff says something crucial, and so obvious that we ignore it constantly, the way people in damaged families change the subject when the horrid father comes up: "There are certain complacencies by which the democracies justify their aversion to sacrifice. We say that because the democracies are virtuous they will always win out in the end; the cold war has proved it. We say that awkward as the system may seem it is still better than all the rest. We say that democracies never fight other democracies, and the world is getting more democratic. We say the people always know best.

"The fact is that democracies compete badly with despotisms. Democracies don't like sacrifices, or the politicians who demand them. Democracies are no good at looking after their security interests when a gun is not pointed at their heads. Democracies don't like to listen to bad news. Democracies don't want to think about bad possibilities in the future. Democracies don't want their comfort or profits interfered with. Democracies may not win out in the long term. It is entirely possible that until now they have merely been lucky."

Christina Stead wrote a chilling novel, *The Man Who Loved Children*, about a determinedly optimistic father who is in fact monstrous. There is a facet of democracy which reminds me of that man, and Pfaff hints at it. From the start, the Enlightenment ignored so much of what being human is about, and the heirs of the Enlightenment carry on as if all of those dark and difficult things could still be ignored or dealt with as if they were peripheral to what really matters—the marketplace of *acceptable ideas*, the seeking out of the least difficult way to proceed, the willingness to put aside anything that could possibly disrupt the orderly conduct of business, the pursuit of happiness (not clarity or truth). One of Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.'s objections to Solzhenitsyn's address at Harvard was that Solzhenitsyn spoke as if he knew the Truth. (The capitalization of the word was a sign of Schlesinger's scorn.)

To speak, as Huntington does, of "the West" usually means to speak of the secular, post-Enlightenment, democratic assumptions of most educated people in industrial societies. There is a lot of what we assume in common that I love and would not want to lose. But for those of us whose values are essentially religious, much of what matters to us lies beyond what we assume in common with our fellow citizens, and we are not willing to assume that because we do not share those religious values, it doesn't matter, or matters less than what we do share. We will begin to be a little closer to collective health when we begin to see that democracy, like indoor plumbing or vaccination, is wonderful; but, like indoor plumbing or vaccination, it is not close to being an adequate guide for understanding life. □



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THE EDUCATION OF THEODORE URSUS

A STORY

E.F. ROBERTS

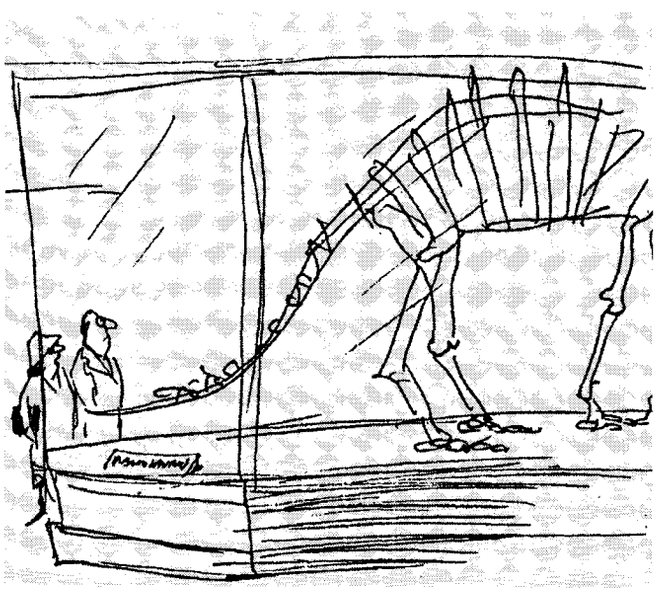
A funeral

Theodore Ursus was relieved to find that the Episcopal church adhered physically to ancient traditions, evidenced by the choir. He was in this place attending the memorial service for a lawyer of some local renown. If the deceased had not been in fact an unchurched Greek-American, he might indeed have made an apt subject for a book limning the archetypical local, white, Anglo-Saxon patriarch who had made small-city or large-town America function. It even dawned upon Ursus that the deceased would have made an almost too perfect model for a novel by James Gould Cozzens, were not that benighted soul himself already dead and buried. Let the dead bury their dead.

Suddenly Ursus woke to the poetry reading being rendered by a professor in the university. It was C.P. Cavafy's "Ithaca" being spoken in Greek and then in English. The congregation, by and large upper-middle-aged and classed, educated by American standards, sat and listened as they would to any other reading in church. By God, Ursus wondered, would they sit just as stolidly were Anthony Blanche to declaim "The Wasteland" with the aid of a megaphone? Had they any idea that Cavafy was "the poet of Alexandria" mentioned in Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*? That the man had been a rabid homosexual? But, he paused to check himself, why get excited? Certainly the archbishop of Canterbury would know and wouldn't give a damn. How did C.H. Sisson's lines go? "The Archbishop of Nothingness/Blew up a bag of wind one day/In place of a sermon, more or less, /At least, that is what people say." But it had to be admitted that Sisson was the kind of high Tory not much seen in the flesh since 1649.

It was then that Ursus began to recall the lines of another one of Cavafy's poems. How did it go precisely? Ah! "And they merit greater honor/when they foresee (and many do foresee)/that Ephialtes will finally appear, /and in the end the Medes will go through." A good poem, even if it had been composed by a reprobate. A poem very suitable for the service were the truth to be known.

But what is truth? Here was being remembered affectionately a dead lawyer, well loved for helping newly arrived academics with their conveyancing problems and later, when their children ran amok, with their juvenile court problems. Here was a lawyer who had almost to be dunned to send a bill, a phenomenon that merited considerable reflection in its own right. Also a lawyer who had overseen the development of a new waterworks, a new public library, and had been midwife to the birth of land-use controls and sound fiscal management in a number of local townships. And what had happened to him? His wife had run off to California with an itinerant professor of half-baked nostrums peddled under the guise of economics. Then in his last year he had become careless and an error might have caused his partners to become liable for professional negligence in one way or another. Malpractice lawsuits were, after all, an American sport of some kind as their



"It's a shame they couldn't cope."

E.F. ROBERTS *is the Edwin H. Woodruff professor of law at Cornell Law School in Ithaca, New York.*

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professions devoured one another. But in this case the partners had kicked the deceased out of the firm he had built and into which he had brought and nurtured them. Beware of young lions, thought Ursus.

Damn, damn, damn, reiterated Ursus, there was irony here and the materials for James Gould Cozzens, author of *Guard of Honor*, the last, if not actually the only Tory novelist America had produced. In fact, that was irony itself come to think of it. Cozzens's last popular novel, *By Love Possessed* (1957), had involved the financial misdeeds of an old lawyer and the courage of a stuffy, four-piece suit as it were, partner just his junior, to set things right while covering up the scandal, a feat which exposed the partners to criminal as well as civil liability. This was the very novel which catalyzed the assault on Cozzens by the New York City *literati* and spelled his doom. He was suddenly seen to be the apotheosis of the Anglo-Saxon establishment, a mean-spirited fellow with no love for Jews, Catholics, or Negroes, much less the poor of whatever belief or hue. Well, it was just chance that the roof caved in on Cozzens, but the roof had to cave in on somebody. Someone has to die to signal when the old order passes. Welcome, friends, to the multiracial, multilingual, multimorality Republic wherein everything goes, even Cavafy in church.

Odd the Cavafy touch. Cozzens's protagonist had been named Arthur Winner, itself an ironic hit, since he symbolized the last remnants of the Anglo-Saxon Protestant ascendancy trying to maintain some semblance of civility and order in an ever more corrupt demos. The deceased Greek-American had taken on the role of Arthur Winner and had been instrumental in making the local community work. His reward was the precise opposite of his fictional counterpart: he was made the goat of the piece rather than the hero. What had the makings of tragedy averted in fiction had, thanks to the invocation of a churched Cavafy, become farce when executed in real life. But then, come to think of it, Ursus mused, this itself might be the lesson. There are no tragedies in America, only farces.

Church and state

Imagine a huge Latin cross lying flat on the ground. Along the sides of each of its four arms erect stone walls just taller than a man. Then at the end of each arm erect an A frame, omitting the crossbar and running the arms up at an angle so each just touches in passing the wall on its side. Add more frames down each arm, but near where they meet, angle these soaring beams toward the center point over which the center line of each of the arms must meet. Connect these A frames with plywood so as to roof in the building over the walls, and add....

Ursus was sitting inside his own church trying to think how he would describe it if he had to. This he found to be a more interesting exercise than listening to the pastor who was launched into one of his sermons. These were never sermons about heaven or hell, or really anything very theological. They always came down to the fact that the priests in the area were dying off and young men were no longer joining the priesthood to replace them. Soon enough Communion should have to be consecrated at a central church by whatever priests still remained and shipped out to local churches, who would have to rely on laypersons to lead Sunday services. And by God, thought Ursus, the numbers proved him right.

One had to admit the pastor was doing all in his power to leave behind the necessary infrastructure. There was the lay deacon listening intently to his master's voice. There was the archpriestess doing the same. At least she did not wear a robe like the last one, but then again, she had quite a pert figure and, mused Ursus wickedly, knew it. But damn it, the new order appeared to involve committees, and committees on committees and total involvement of everybody in everything. Gone were the dark church and the priest intoning Latin. Gone were the incense and the chants. Gone was the feeling that one was participating in something that had been participated in by generation upon generation of one's forebears. Gone were the awe and even the opportunity, if one were so inclined, to feel that somehow God was implicated in these somber proceedings. Now it was Mass recited in banal English, no, American, along with everyone constantly getting up to sing, to shake hands, to hold hands, to smile, to do everything but be able to have a quiet moment of interiorized communication with a felt Almighty in an appropriate setting. It was Rotary out of Sociology II. God was dead; long live Rotary.

Ursus gave another look at his pastor, decked out in sandals and affecting the habit of a monk. If the truth were known, the pastor would have preferred going off to Mexico as a missionary. But did the Mexicans need a lay bureaucracy, a committee structure, a full menu of lectures and meetings? What would they think of a priestess or two? If God still lived, Father Geezer and the ratlady were going to cost Ursus a lot of time in purgatory. Strike that. If God still lived, Ursus was bound for hell.

He tried for a moment to shift his thoughts to purely secular concerns, better to blank out the Geezer's nattering about the need for tithing to support the bureaucracy he had built up. This effort led Ursus to recall a recent event at the law school where he earned his keep as a chaired professor. There had been a recent selection of a new dean in the attenuated processes of which only one candidate had been left in the running. The faculty were badly split between dries who favored this person and wets who could not abide him. It had been pretty clear all along that this person was the university president's choice and that the votes were there to evidence sufficient faculty support to legitimate his appointment. He was going to win even though one of his tenured friends, having appointed himself something of a campaign manager, was threatening to make tenure difficult to obtain should any of the junior faculty prove too obstreperous. Then, lo and behold, the day of reckoning was had when a secret ballot was taken at a meeting of the faculty. One of the most doctrinaire of the wets, one who in whispered conversations in the halls had urged on the future dean's most ardent opponents, this fellow marked his ballot "yes" and showed it to the once and future dean's mean-spirited campaign manager. Even a dog,

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thought Ursus, might have had more character than that. It didn't help much to think that this cretin was a lector in a nearby rural parish, which was probably the very reason that Ursus started on this line of reverie at this particular moment.

But no, it wasn't the behavior of a coreligionist which was at the bottom of things. It was the behavior of one of the school's leading lights, a legal theorist of international renown. He had descended on one of his untenured juniors at a time it was believed that a certain faculty member might contest the election of the new dean. The herr doktor professor, pulling himself up to his full Napoleonic height and putting on a very serious face, advised the neophyte to beware this potential candidate, this because he had been educated at Notre Dame. Enough said. It didn't matter whether the fellow had long ago ceased to practice his religion. Enough had been said. Enough indeed, mused Ursus, to make me come to Mass each week even though I sometimes doubt that God lives. As with the Jews, religion among certain Celtic elements becomes a racial thing, a mark of the tribe to which one belongs and can never leave, even when one ceases to believe in the actual tenets of the religion. And likely, like a good Celt, Ursus was in church because Roman Catholicism was still taboo among leading lights in a prestigious Ivy League university near the end of the twentieth century. But the Geezer and the ratlady would put an end to that when they converted the alien Roman church into the American Rotary church.

Peace be with you? The Geezer had concluded the pre-Communion prayers and everyone was making ready for the modern high point of the Mass when greetings were exchanged. "Peace" was on everyone's lips as they shook hands or hugged each other. Ursus hated every moment of this, to him, kissy-boo-boo, love-bug interval. He did not find much peace in church, only orchestrated togetherness. But at work there were only lessons in human depravity, and these were rendered all the more depressing because the depraved lacked the daring to commit anything but venial sins against each other. Death might not be such a bad end to a tale told by an idiot which signified nothing. It finally occurred to him that this was a pretty odd way to be reflecting while sitting in church. In fact, it was a hell of an odd way to be thinking.

Quid est veritas?

Sitting one night in his study, Ursus reflected upon his musings at the funeral and in his own church. They did not bode well for the mental health of a man of sixty who was, by most standards, rather successful and well off. His own recent writings had been bottomed upon the idea of a universe governed purely by chance, which suggested that there weren't many lessons to be drawn from his concrete experience. Still, before he died, God used to lay about smiting people left and right without cause. Consider that poor bugger Job. God's world was a world of chaos, calamity, and no justice at all, a world of chance as it were as far as humankind were concerned. But that god had been replaced by something more akin to Father Christmas, or Mother Christmas for that matter, who forgave everyone for everything, excepting perhaps fascists and Nazis for anything. Christ now carried a hanky with which to wipe tears, and busied himself establishing soup kitchens and enrolling the poor on the voting rolls. The Virgin of Chartres was unknown. But again, just as God appears to have died, so has my world. Indeed, concluded Ursus, my Virgin is the Adams Memorial.

Yet, we are all creatures of experience, and it is our experiences and the luck of the genetic draw which makes each of us what we are. Maybe a serious rehearsal of experience might shed some light on his recent black-dog mood. Indeed, reflection might actually reveal that there were some real lessons to be distilled out of experience. Or perchance, the lesson might turn out to be that there were no meanings thereby to be derived, a good reason not to pursue the idea.

His mind began to go back to the days when he went to a law school situated on the upper floors of an office building abutting a run-down square in downtown Boston, then hardly a prepossessing setting for a law school, what with its collection of seedy saloons and burlesque houses. Yet he had never seen the equal of the teaching, be it sometimes a brutal application of the Socratic method, than he had witnessed there. These were teachers committed to teaching, this at the sacrifice of writing fancy books that would get them a call to one of the better schools. He recalled also the summer days he spent digging ditches and installing gas mains to help pay his way through

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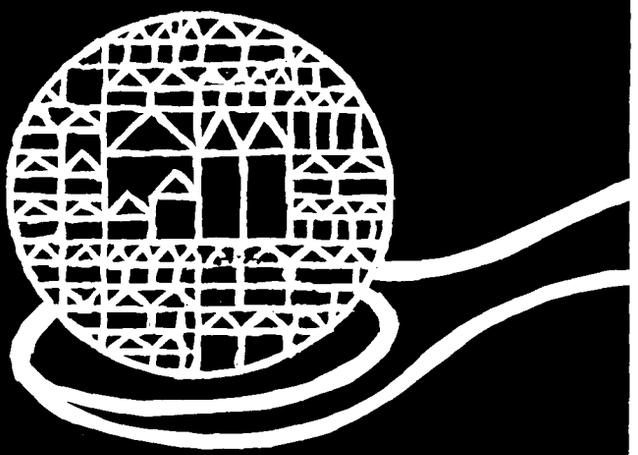

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law school. People actually relished what they were doing, finding a great deal of satisfaction installing what has become known as an infrastructure.

Long gone were the old law school premises, the school having migrated several times since to ever better physical plants in ever more upscale suburban settings. Long gone were the people he worked with at the gas company, several of them having died together in an accident on the job. Long gone were those days. Indeed, they were best forgotten, because by Ivy League standards those days were pretty seedy days. Yet, by the standards of working people, real working people who used their hands and their backs and got dirty, those were grand days. By the same token, his teachers would not have doubted for a moment the value of what they were doing, and would have laughed at the idea that a call from some more renowned school had any intrinsic value. And for Ursus, these had been very grand days indeed. They were steps, after all, out of the dirt and the grime of the working class from which he had sprung. Few law professors, after all, were ever killed on the job in an industrial accident.

Workers, tax gatherers, and even whores would have been comfortable in these old settings, and he had known them all and been comfortable with them. Odd. Odd until it suddenly struck home that the Geezer was right in wanting to go off to Mexico or wherever to be with the poor. That was where the real church was, the church of misfits, the outcasts, the sinners as it were. And the ratbag, poor woman? As usual, she was going to be left with the next best thing after the menfolk: tending to an upper-middle-class flock too timid actually to sin seriously. And the Geezer was right to be constructing something Rotarian; it met the needs of the customers and kept them within the church. But this only made him more eager to be off to serve the poor and the outcasts in some disgusting province of nowhere.

But where did this line of thinking leave Ursus? Likely it was that he had been as comfortable with the Trinity as his remote ancestors had been with Morrigan, Macha, and Bobd, the goddesses of war. Comfortable, that is, so long as the mystery of existence could be brooded upon in peace amidst one's own kind. There was not quiet time for brooding in church anymore and the Celtic parish had disappeared. One could, of course, pretend that things had not changed and act like a stage Celt; or one could accept the change and capitalize upon Celtic wit in today's Rotarian world. But neither Patrick Buchanan nor John McLaughlin struck Ursus as people he would particularly care to have on his property. All of which suggested that he was left a person without hope and without direction. It then dawned upon him that progress so-called entailed casualties. Ursus had been deprived of, if not technically his beliefs, his cultural environment. He was a dinosaur on the verge of extinction. Somewhere in the novel *Darkness at Noon,* the interrogator Gletkin suggested to Rubashov that, while he was being sacrificed for the good of the Party, some future generation would raise a memorial to him and his kind. Would Rome some day acknowledge the intangible losses inflicted upon people of the ilk of Ursus? □

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STUCK WITH A SATANIST?

RELIGIOUS AUTONOMY IN A REGULATED SOCIETY

STEPHEN L. CARTER

Suppose that you, a religious person, decide to rent out an apartment over your garage. Along comes a possible renter who seems to meet all your requirements, except that he lets slip, in casual conversation, that he is a Satanist. He tells you that he intends, while living in your apartment, to conduct certain rituals demanded by his faith. Now, it happens that your state's fair housing law prohibits religious discrimination, and you share the moral premises of that law. (The federal Fair Housing Act does not apply to rentals of single-family homes by their owners or rentals of rooms in such homes, or to buildings with fewer than five units if the owner actually occupies one of them.) On the other hand, you cannot, consistent with your own religion, allow Satanic rituals on your property. What do you do?

If you follow the law—a law you generally support—then you must allow on your property activities that your religion forbids. But if you reject the tenant because he happens to be a Satanist, you will be in violation of the law and could face a heavy fine. You might want to plead in defense your constitutional right to exercise your religion freely, asking for an accommodation of your beliefs, which means, in this case, an exception to a valid statute that applies to everybody else. But that would seem something of a long shot. The Supreme Court has made such a mess of the right to exercise one's religion freely that there is little chance the claim for an exemption would succeed. So you would, in the name of nondiscrimination, be stuck with the Satanist.

Of course you have an alternative. You could take the apartment off the market entirely. Or you could try. It might not work, because overcoming such devices as the withdrawal of a listing is the sort of thing any good lawyer can do in her sleep. Then, assuming you were to get away with it, you would have saved your religious beliefs, but at the cost of getting out of the market, which means losing income. If no exemption is forthcoming, your unattractive choice is between going to hell by renting to someone who will engage in activities you are religiously forbidden to allow on your property and not renting at all.

The dilemma is not entirely hypothetical. Consider a case that arose in California not long ago, when an unmarried couple found their application for an apartment refused because their potential landlords, John and Agnes Donahue, believed they would be "putting themselves in the position of eternal, divine retribution" if they allowed the sin of fornication, as they described it, on their property. Because housing discrimination on the basis of marital status is forbidden in California, the rejected applicants filed a complaint. The Donahues responded that their religious freedom was at stake.

The case poses precisely and painfully the liberal dilemma when religious liberty runs up against the regulatory ubiquity of the welfare state. In late twentieth-century America, nearly everyone seems to operate with the general presumption that the government can and should regulate in whatever areas suit its constituents' fancy—unless opponents can interpose a claim of constitutional right. And as federal constitutional rights go, the right to exercise religion freely is quite near the bottom of the totem pole. But the states are free under their own constitutions to protect more than the federal Constitution does, and a friend-of-the-court brief in the Donahue case, signed by religious organizations across the political spectrum, urged the California Supreme Court to demand that the state meet a heavy burden of justification before applying the antidiscrimination law to the Donahues—perhaps even the "compelling interest" test that the Supreme Court rejected when, in its 1990 decision in *Employment Division* v. *Smith*, it allowed punishment for Native Americans required to use peyote in their religious rituals.

The Donahue case, although many may find it especially poignant, is not unique. Antidiscrimination law is one of the cutting edges of the accommodation problem, not least because many religious traditions encourage or even require discrimination on grounds that we as a nation have rejected or are on the way to rejecting. Although few American religious traditions will admit any longer to relegating people of color to an inferior status—even the Mormons at last experienced a new revelation, that black members can be priests of the Inner Temple after all—there are many who understand the word of God as barring women from priesthood, notwithstanding that the equality of women is firmly established in secular law. And many more religions do not allow as ministers individuals who engage in homosexual activities, even as the gay and lesbian rights movement makes important secular inroads.

No one—yet—proposes state regulation of the ministry, but

STEPHEN L. CARTER *is William Nelson Cromwell Professor of Law at Yale University and the author of* Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby. *This essay is excerpted from* The Culture of Disbelief, *to be published in September by Basic Books. Printed by permission.*

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the organized churches are large and complicated operations, and most have many lay employees. Given the broad protections that exist in law against employment discrimination, the potential problems are obvious. Should a church be able to require that the gardener be a coreligionist? That the plumber take a religious oath? That the painter tithe?

In general, the Supreme Court has seemed indecisive in the face of religious objections to statutes regarding employment practices. So, for example, the justices ruled in 1979 that the National Labor Relations Board cannot exercise jurisdiction over lay teachers in Catholic schools. Then, six years later, the Court ruled that the Labor Department can enforce minimum-wage laws on behalf of at least some employees of religious foundations. Now, that is another view, not quite consistent with the first. But at least the justices are in there punching.

When forbidden discrimination is the issue, even Supreme Court justices who might otherwise be considered accommodationists tread warily. In the best-known case, *Corporation of Presiding Bishop of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints* v. *Amos* (1987), the Court upheld a provision of federal law exempting secular nonprofit activities of religious organizations from the general prohibition of discrimination on the basis of religion. The decision, though, was narrow, resting on the conclusion that the exemption was intended to avoid "significant governmental interference with the ability of religious organizations to defend and carry out their religious missions."

One might argue, as the legal scholar Kathleen Sullivan has done (*see*, "Religion and Liberal Democracy," *University of Chicago Law Review*, 59 [1992]), that what is at issue in these cases is a "religious opt-out from the redistributive programs of the welfare state." We are talking, after all, about employment rights that exist because of the statutes of the New Deal and the Second Reconstruction: the rights of employees to organize unions, to be paid a fair wage, and to be free of market discrimination. The same might be said of the California housing discrimination case mentioned earlier, even though the rights of unmarried couples there asserted are of more recent vintage. Thus, one might conclude, with Sullivan, that "[j]ust as religionists must pay for the secular army that engineers the truce among them, they must pay for the other common goods of the civil public order."

Now, even if one concedes the bemusing notion that a major task of the armed forces of the United States is to avert religious strife, there is still trouble in the welfare state paradise. If the religions are properly called upon to make the sacrifices that the law requires because the statutes in question all involve the provision of common goods, one might then conclude that the *Smith* case, sustaining the punishment of Native Americans for using peyote in worship as required by their religion, was rightly decided after all—a sacrifice that they must make in order to enable a common war on drugs. Sullivan, however, is certain that *Smith* is wrong, and that it represents discrimination against—indeed, a certain judicial "blindness" about—a minority religion, which it certainly does. Sullivan's distinction seems to be that *Smith* involves a judgment made by an adult about drug use, whereas the cases she comfortably considers examples of the welfare state in action involve the employment relationship, which is different.

One is tempted to respond, welfare state or none, that the employees are also adults, and may work for low pay for their religious organizations as willingly as the state employees in *Smith* used peyote in their rituals. But a different answer is also possible. Imagine that we are in the United States not of the late twentieth century but of the late nineteenth, when state laws required racial discrimination in many areas of life, and when, for example, religious groups that ran integrated schools in the South were threatened with prosecution. These statutes were defended—implausibly, but never mind—as improving the society. Would Sullivan really suggest that a religion should not be allowed to opt out of generally applicable secular regulations on education? One might answer that greater religious autonomy was needed in an oppressive American South of the nineteenth century than is needed in the liberal democracy we are said to enjoy today. But while I, like Sullivan, tend to be a supporter of regulatory government, many religions see the welfare state, for all its virtues, as oppressive of their liberties.

What is needed, in order to bring coherence to the problem of accommodation, is a richer understanding not of the nature of the welfare state, or, indeed, of government, but of the nature of the religions themselves, particularly the nature of religious autonomy. To gain that richer understanding, one must think not of the way the society looks at religions but of the way religions look at themselves. In the 1987 *Presiding Bishop* case, a separate opinion by Justice William J. Brennan, joined by Justice Thurgood Marshall, got the point right:

> For many individuals, religious activity derives meaning in large measure from participation in a larger religious community. Such a community represents an ongoing tradition of shared beliefs, an organic entity not reducible

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to a mere aggregation of individuals. Determining that certain activities are in furtherance of an organization's religious mission, and that only those committed to that mission should conduct them, is thus a means by which a religious community defines itself. Solicitude for a church's ability to do so reflects the idea that furtherance of the autonomy of religious organizations often furthers individual religious freedom as well.

What Brennan understood—and what the Court, and the literature, too often do not—was that religion is more than a matter of what an individual chooses to believe. Religions are communities of corporate worship, or, as one might say in this postmodern world, communities of sense and value, groups of believers struggling to come to a common understanding of the world. So when one speaks of autonomy, one is speaking not just of the individual, but also of the group.

The group, moreover, will often be engaged in what David Tracy calls acts of resistance—interposing the group judgment against the judgment of a larger society. Worshiping together, endeavoring jointly to discern the will of God, if honestly done, will lead frequently to that result. When the state tries to block that process of discernment in a faith community, it is acting tyrannically by removing potential sources of authority and meaning different from itself. This, too, Brennan plainly understood in a way that the Court as a whole rarely has:

> The authority to engage in this process of self-definition inevitably involves what we normally regard as infringement on free exercise rights, since a religious organization is able to condition employment in certain activities on subscription to particular religious tenets. We are willing to countenance the imposition of such a condition because we deem it vital that, if certain activities constitute part of a religious community's practice, than a religious organization should be able to require that only members of its community perform those activities.

Brennan was concerned about what abuses this rule might invite, and he added a sensible caveat: "Religious organizations should be able to discriminate on the basis of religion only with respect to religious activities, so that a determination should be made in each case whether an activity is religious or secular." One can see Brennan's point: hiring a plumber to fix the sink in a parish hall is not the same thing as hiring a counselor to work in a religious program to fix dysfunctional families. Still, what Brennan does not say—but what his line of argument implies—is that the key "determination [of] whether an activity is religious or secular" must give considerable, if not decisive, weight to the religion's own vision of the distinction. If one does happen to encounter a religion that considers the repair of the sink God's work, one must not respond blithely—as the courts too often do—with, "Really? Well, we don't."

Translating this principle into law, one would say that the central acts of faith of a religious community—the aspects that do the most to produce shared meaning within the corporate body of worship—are entitled to the highest solicitude by the courts, and, therefore, when infringing on those central acts, the state must offer a very convincing reason. As the acts of

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faith that the state seeks to regulate or forbid become less central, the state's burden of justification grows less.

In terms of the cases, this would mean that before punishing an obviously central act such as the use of peyote by the Native American Church (the *Smith* case) or before destroying the land that makes a religious tradition possible (*Lyng* v. *Northwest Indian Cemetery Protective Association*, 1988), the state would have to meet a very high burden of justification, perhaps even show a compelling interest, before it is allowed, through a seemingly neutral policy, to trespass upon the central faith-world of a religion. In those cases, it is not likely the burden could have been met, so the decisions are probably wrong.

The welfare-state cases—those involving employment or housing discrimination—might at first seem more difficult to resolve. After all (one might object), in *Smith* and *Lyng* the government is acting against people who simply want to worship, but the Donahues are trying to make money. If their religion will not let them make it by the rules the state has set out, can't they just put their money somewhere else? But the objection is a non sequitur. It in particular does not distinguish *Smith*: the reason the state of Oregon punished the Native Americans for using peyote was that they were state employees. Presumably, if they do not like the rule, they can work for somebody else.

More fundamentally, however, the objection misses the critical difference between living in a society that does much regulating and a society that does little. The First Amendment was written for a world in which regulation was expected to be rare and would almost never impinge on religious liberty. We live instead in a world in which regulation is everywhere, and the idea that the religious citizen can escape it, through a careful search, is a fantasy. Besides, even were escape easier, the problem remains that religious people might wind up finding it more costly to participate in the market than others who do not share their views. Of course these additional costs—such as the cost of not being able to discriminate—might be justifiable. The accommodation test here proposed would only demand that the state offer more than an ordinary justification for them.

It is not possible to resolve here all the many cases that might arise from pursuing this approach, so I will limit myself to making two points. First, it would be both a secular and a religious disaster were religions by the dozen suddenly to come forward claiming a free exercise right to engage in all the many forms of discrimination that secular politics has decided to forbid. However, it would also be a secular and religious disaster were we to rule out entirely the possibility that a few religions could come forward and meet the test I have proposed. Deciding when to allow exemptions would place a tremendous burden on the courts—but there is no reason that the hard work of protecting freedom should be easy.

Thus, resolution of the cases involving the minimum wage or labor-organizing rights for employees not directly connected with the central religious function of the church would require more searching inquiries than the Supreme Court generally likes to see the federal courts undertake. The case of the refusal of the Donahues to rent to an unmarried couple, however, may be a simple one. If, as the Donahues claim, their religious tradition teaches that they will be damned if they allow fornication on their property, it is hard to see why anything other than a compelling interest should allow the state to put them at risk.

Still, in crafting a sensible understanding of religious autonomy, the courts ideally should play only a minor role. The more important role is the one that society itself must play, in its politics and its rhetoric. As with every fundamental human right, the ultimate security of religious liberty lies not in judges' opinions but in citizens' commitments; it is vital that we ourselves, the people of the United States, before allowing our government to trespass on religious freedom, balance the depth of our moral commitment to the policy in question against the value of religious autonomy. If our commitment to the policy wins every time, then we really have become the majoritarian tyrants against whom Tocqueville warned us a century and a half ago.

One of the reasons that the asserted political influence of religious groups is so feared is that some people believe that the religions, if politically empowered, might try to impose on the secular society their own versions of the good life. This is, of course, a real danger, although there is reason to doubt that more harm to individual freedom *necessarily* occurs when a religion seeks to impose its vision of the good life than when an entirely secular political movement does it. Indeed, it is not easy, in a nation committed to religious liberty, to understand why the risk that the religions might try to impose their religious visions of the good life on secular society is more to be avoided than the risk that the state and its powerful constituents might try to impose a secular vision of the good life on the religions. □

SCREEN

BIG STUPID FUN

'PARK' & 'HERO'

"Big Fun" is what a children's librarian I know promises to the kids who join her summer reading club. Yet what does she give them once they turn in the lists of books they've read? Rubber spiders, plastic bracelets, seahorse combs, free ice cream, connect-the-dots puzzles, paperback books, and magic shows performed by apprentice prestidigitators. It doesn't matter. The kids read diligently, turn in their lists proudly, and revel in their measly rewards. Conviction carries the day. Because she believes in the importance of the program, so do the kids. And Big Fun is had by one and all.

Of course, these same kids know where Really Big Fun is

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to be had during the summer. At the movies. This summer the designated megahits are Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* and the John McTiernan-Arnold Schwarzenegger *Last Action Hero*.

Jurassic Park is all about dinosaurs, and for most kids dinosaurs are the very definition of Big Fun. Spielberg's are wonderful. It's not so much that you take them for real as that you marvel at the deftness of the manufacture. At the end of the movie, the paleontologist-hero played by Sam Neill, having survived several dinosaur attacks, bemusedly gazes at a bird flying past his vehicle. You sense what he's thinking. So this is what's left of the awesome monsters: gentled by evolution into harmless birds. But when I drove away from the theater, it wasn't birds I was rediscovering. Instead, I found myself registering faint waves of unease each time I pulled in or out of the paths of trucks. The noise and power of rigs kept reminding me of what Spielberg had evoked on screen: not the strangeness of ancient animal life but the crushing monstrosity of big machinery. Watching monster vehicles grind each other to smithereens is entertainment for some people. *Jurassic Park* is a slightly upscale version of those destruction shows.

Did it work for me? Not quite. Oh, I enjoyed myself, and I still think of Spielberg as a gifted entertainer. He is never content to merely photograph the amazing saurian inventions of his engineers but insists on investing his moviemaking with its own delights. He is a master craftsman who knows how to foreshadow, counterpoint, encapsulate, build a crescendo, manage a decrescendo. And so certain moments linger in the mind: the sight of water trembling in a glass just before we hear the footsteps of the tyrannosaurus rex; the screeching of a car's wheels turning over in a rut suddenly answered by the remarkably similar sounds of the king dinosaur's cry; a smaller but equally vicious raptor wavers for a split second in its onslaught on three humans and actually seems to grin as it decides whom to attack first.

And yet this movie sadly confirmed for me the fact that Spielberg is growing more and more careless and even callous in his storytelling. When he isn't wowing us with cliffhanging suspense and unusual images, he is often bungling details of action and characterization. As befits a movie that features both the huge brachiosaurus and the much smaller coelophysis, there are both macro and micro stupidities in this movie.

Macro examples, first. The basic idea of a park filled with huge, infinitely dangerous monsters controlled merely by computers (those neurotic and unreliable machines!) and only partially charged electric fences seems the brainchild of a peculiarly self-destructive crackpot. Yet the entrepreneur of Jurassic Park, as written by Michael Crichton and winsomely played by Richard Attenborough, is meant to be basically sane, feyly charming, wholly benevolent. And it is this jolly old Santa Claus of a capitalist who gleefully allows his beloved grandchildren to be the first tourists in the park even after he's been warned that the more intelligent of the saurians have been testing the fences for nonelectric segments! And why would a millionaire with his pick of the best computer experts in the world hire an obviously sleazy, mercenary, and uncaring slob to cybernate his potentially lethal amusement park? (I've recently learned from readers of Crichton's novel that the book's millionaire is a greedy megalomaniac. Now *that* makes sense!)

Now, micro examples. If the hero knows that dinosaurs are attracted to movement, why does he bolt from the adequate shelter of a large rock in order to run away in full view? Why do monsters who can't hear the loud chatter of humans hiding in a kitchen with echoing acoustics suddenly hear the drop of a ladle to the floor? Why does the hero, who has just discovered his fatherly instincts while protecting Attenborough's grandchildren, pretend in full view of the kids, who are understandably in a state of near-shock, to touch a live wire and suffer death by electrocution? The moment is meant to be funny but comes across as sadistic. And what has happened to Spielberg's skill at directing children? The young actors here are allowed to bicker so obnoxiously that I finally wanted to see them become saurian snacks. All this demonstrates that Spielberg no longer knows how to put real toads in his imaginary gardens. He is losing the human touch that made the fantasies *Close Encounters* and *E.T.* convincing and poignant as well as eye-popping.

None of this makes any difference whatsoever to the thousands of kids who have lined up to see the movie. They have come to see big beasts on the loose making mouthfuls of us little, less interesting beasts. And that is exactly what they get. *Jurassic Park* is Big Fun all right. But some of it is just Big Stupid Fun.

Perhaps too many years of movie reviewing have turned my brain to mush but it seems to me that the latest Arnold Schwarzenegger movie, *The Last Action Hero*, is a witty and well-crafted film. Its basic idea is taken from Woody Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, but that's all right; director John McTiernan and his scriptwriters add to what they steal.

A little boy uses a magic charm to enter the latest movie of his celluloid hero, Jack Slade, played by Arnold. Instead of being bewildered, the kid, a veteran moviegoer, knows exactly what's going to happen and how to handle himself. He can't take too many risks because he's only the comic sidekick and, after all, comic sidekicks are sometimes killed off. Slade, of course, is invulnerable, but he's bewildered by this boy who insists that Slade and his whole world are nothing but pop fiction. Slade feels his own reality but the boy keeps producing evidence to the contrary. How does he know that Slade's FBI agent pal is really a slimeball? That's easy. The agent is played by F. Murray Abraham and didn't he kill Mozart in *Amadeus*? Then the boy tests Slade by writing down the "f" word and daring his hero to say it out loud. Why can't Slade bring himself to do it? That's also easy. Slade lives inside a PG-13 film world and PG-13 doesn't permit the "f" word. But when the little inquisitor adduces as further evidence that there are no unattractive women in Slade's existence, the muscleman has the perfect rebuttal: "Of course not. This is California!"

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McTiernan, who made *Die Hard*, may not have Spielberg's finesse, but he knows the genre he's parodying and he's good at giving the action movie gambits just the nudge they need to turn them into the stuff of farce. Sometimes, though, it's more than a nudge, as when the villain (played with wonderful saturnine self-mockery by Charles Dance) warns Slade that his growling attack dogs are "quite well-trained," then snaps his fingers. The dogs immediately leap into pyramid formation. At moments like these, *Action Hero* invades the territory of *Airplane!* and *Naked Gun*.

The movie's energy flags only in its last quarter, and this seems to be because the moviemakers are afraid to shift gears. The plot has Slade and the boy leave the celluloid world to pursue the villain into real life where bullets can really hurt action heroes. But, though Slade concedes that breaking a window now hurts his hand, he pretty much carries on as before. What was needed here was a sharp, comic-pathetic deflation, with Schwarzenegger being flung up against a reality where muscles and wisecracks can only go so far. But the moviemakers have too much money riding on this project to stop Arnold from being Arnold. And so the gunfire, the shattering of glass, the thud and thump and kapow never let up. Witty and well-made as so much of *Last Action Hero* is, it finally exhausts rather than exhilarates.

Big Fun must strain to keep on being Big Fun even when just a small dose of conviction would carry the day.

RICHARD ALLEVA

JACK DEEDY SOLVES A MYSTERY

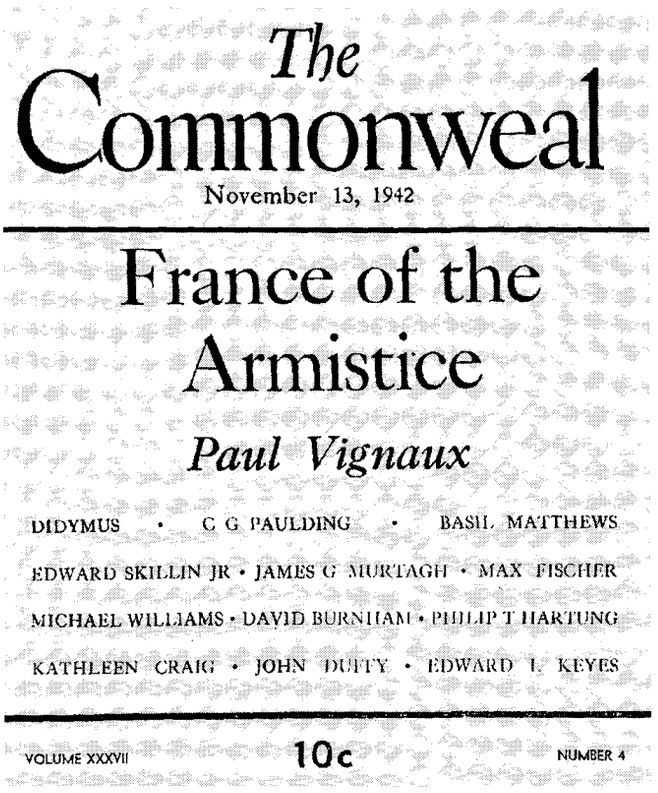
Who was Didymus?

THE FACE BEHIND THE PSEUDONYM

The year was 1942, and commencing with the November 6 issue of *Commonweal*—10 cents! at your local newsstand—there appeared, without fanfare, a new and highly ruminative column under the unpretentious title "Lecture Notes." "Didymus" was the enigmatic pseudonym used by the author. Six weeks later (*Commonweal* was a weekly then), the column was just as abruptly and unceremoniously ended. In his five columns, the anonymous writer speculated on, among other heady topics, the metaphysical ambiguities of vanity; how Judaism was like unto a young girl anticipating the appearance of her lover while Christianity assumed the pose of a married woman; drew illuminating distinctions between the naive hero and the tragic hero; and tackled the theological assumptions separating natural and revealed religion. Abstruse and allusive, the columns were nevertheless marked by a rare directness and energy of language.

It was not until 1973 that the fate of Didymus seems to have intrigued anyone at the magazine—or elsewhere, for that matter. *Commonweal*'s former managing editor Jack Deedy recalls how he was in the office elevator with Edward S. Skillin, *Commonweal*'s once editor and future publisher, a few days after W.H. Auden's death. Commenting on the news, Skillin mentioned that Auden had written for the magazine under the pen name Didymus. As Deedy writes in the introduction to his forthcoming monograph, *Auden as Didymus* (Paul P. Appel, Mount Vernon, N.Y.), the columns were "the best kept secret of Auden's literary life....the association escaped the notice of Auden's bibliographers. The Didymus columns were in effect lost to history as well as memory."

That oversight, uncovered in 1973, will be fully corrected with the publication of Deedy's essay, which among other pertinent questions discusses Auden's larger relationship with *Commonweal*, where he reviewed books and also published sections of his poems, the Christmas oratorio *For the Time Being*, and the Pulitzer prize-winning *The Age of Anxiety*. The per-


The
Commonweal
November 13, 1942
France of the Armistice
Paul Vignaux
DIDYMUS · G G PAULDING · BASIL MATTHEWS
EDWARD SKILLIN JR · JAMES G MURTAGH · MAX FISCHER
MICHAEL WILLIAMS · DAVID BURNHAM · PHILIP T HARTUNG
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sonal origins and meaning of Auden's use of Didymus as a pen name remain obscure. And exactly why the column was ended also remains shrouded in mystery, although that should not come as too much of a surprise to anyone familiar with the workings of a magazine.

Deedy's book will appear in the early fall, coinciding with the twentieth anniversary of Auden's death. It has been fifty years since Didymus penned his columns for *Commonweal*. Reprinting some brief excerpts from those fugitive "Lecture Notes" seems fitting commemoration and celebration.

THE EDITORS

November 20, 1942

If one accepts the view that the purpose of Art is to arouse or communicate emotions, then Tolstoy's argument in "What Is Art" is irrefutable. Any chromolithograph depicting an act of Christian charity is superior to *War and Peace* or *Macbeth*. Such a theory however is pagan, not Christian. Just as love is redeemed by being redefined as *agape* instead of *eros*, so art is redeemed when its function is redefined as, not the expression or communication of emotion, but the becoming conscious of emotion.

●

By such a definition, a poet, for example, whether lyric or dramatic, is not trying to feel something that he would like or thinks he ought to feel, but to find out what his feelings really are, and, of course, most of these will be neither pleasant nor good. He sings alone before God, but he may be overheard by other men and what they hear may cause them, one by one, to undergo a similar process of discovery. If the result is to make them feel in unity with each other, it is not because they are all filled with the same emotion, but because they share the same knowledge of weakness, and dare not therefore judge each other.

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Art cannot make a man want to become good, but it can prevent him from imagining that he already is; it cannot give him faith in God, but it can show him his despair. DIDYMUS

December 4, 1942

Faith for Judaism is the power to endure the suffering of waiting. The possibility of offense for Judaism lies in the fact that God has not yet fulfilled his promise. For the Jew to be offended is for him to despair, and say: "The promise is never going to be fulfilled; therefore there is no God." This is despair, but he knows that it is despair. When a Jew loses his faith, he becomes consciously an atheist.

Faith for Christianity means the power to endure the paradox that Jesus, the individual historical man, was and is, as he claimed, Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father.

The Christian possibilities of offense are therefore two: the direct refusal to believe, as when certain disciples walked no more with him, and then the much more insidious offense of not recognizing that the offense exists.

Thus a man can say: "Of course I am a Christian. There are the Gospels to prove that Jesus existed, and the existence of

the church to prove that his claim to be Christ was true. I go to church every Sunday. What it all means, I can safely leave to the theologians."

This is as if a married woman were to say: "Look at my large centrally-heated apartment, and here is my marriage license which my lawyer tells me is valid. I can't say I remember ever having met my husband personally, but what of that? The important thing is that I can put Mrs. before my name." A Christian, that is, can lose his faith or never have won it without ever realizing it. He can be a pagan, and still grow red in the face over all the Communists and free-thinkers in our school system.

●

The shocking proof that this is happening today is the appearance of anti-Semitism among those who profess and call themselves Christians.

The anti-Semitism of the Middle Ages was a wicked thing, but at least it regarded the Jew as a heretic, not a a member of a racial group. It persecuted the Jew because he refused to be baptized.

Modern anti-Semitism, on the other hand, is one symptom of a Christendom which has taken offense at faith, but finding that nothing means social breakdown, is determined to replace it by a pagan political religion. The Jew is persecuted because he cannot deceive himself. His witness is this—either faith or nothing. Whereas a corrupt Christendom wants to say: "Faith is too difficult; nothing is despair; we must have no God but Caesar. There might be no harm, though, in Caesar being a cleric." DIDYMUS □

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NANCY PARKE
Shoe Shop, Urbino

Umberto Ottani carves angels
and other local figures;
in bas-relief and round they cram the shelves
of his shoe repair shop.
Il Duca Federico of
Piero's famous profile
squints one-eyed at Rafaello's
moony self-portrait
which dreamily regards
the three foreground figures
of Piero's Flagellation
deep in talk. Cittadini.
Their originals live up the hill
in the Galleria Nazionale.
Here in Ottani's shop they stand at ease
with Michelangelo's Pietà
  about eight inches square in walnut;
a young warrior midstride
  that Greek bronze they found
  in the sea off Riace
  Ottani has the clipping;
a snoutnosed professor from the university;
an Uccello devil;
more devils and saints
  local and foreign
  copied and imagined.
Nativities. Crucifixions.
Angels.

He finishes their surfaces
with shoe polish.
His shop is full of its pungent tang
layered with something savory
  basil olive oil and garlic
from the kitchen upstairs,
full of motes of dust
adrift in the wedge of light
from the open door,
full of wooden figures
and here and there
a miniature shoe
like this high heel, four inches long,
in wine red calfskin lined in kid
also his craft.
He dangles this one
and grins
Umberto Ottani
who began as artigiano
repairer of shoes,
then as state employee
taught his craft to prison boys
at the reform school, who
at mandatory retirement
returned to shoes and carving
and now at eighty
can't stop making things.

He knows his worth.
This humpbacked thicknecked angel
startled out of abstraction
to glance up with lunatic sweetness
two weeks ago was thirty thousand lire.
Beh, fifty thousand, declares Umberto Ottani;
  un pezzo intero d'ulivo questo
an olive tree uprooted by a storm
a little down the road to Fermignano.
Fifty thousand
santo cielo
for form's sake I should argue
but I would give more than that
  my ticket to California if I could
for this angel
image of Umberto Ottani
summer and winter going up the steps
of Federico's castle become gallery
to browse among the cittadini there
  with a piece of fruitwood
  chestnut maybe
  from the hillside below Pretelli's vineyard
in mind
  in mind
as the way things ought to be.

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Flannery O'Connor in reverse

JESUS' SON
Stories
Denis Johnson
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $19, 160 pp.

Daria Donnelly

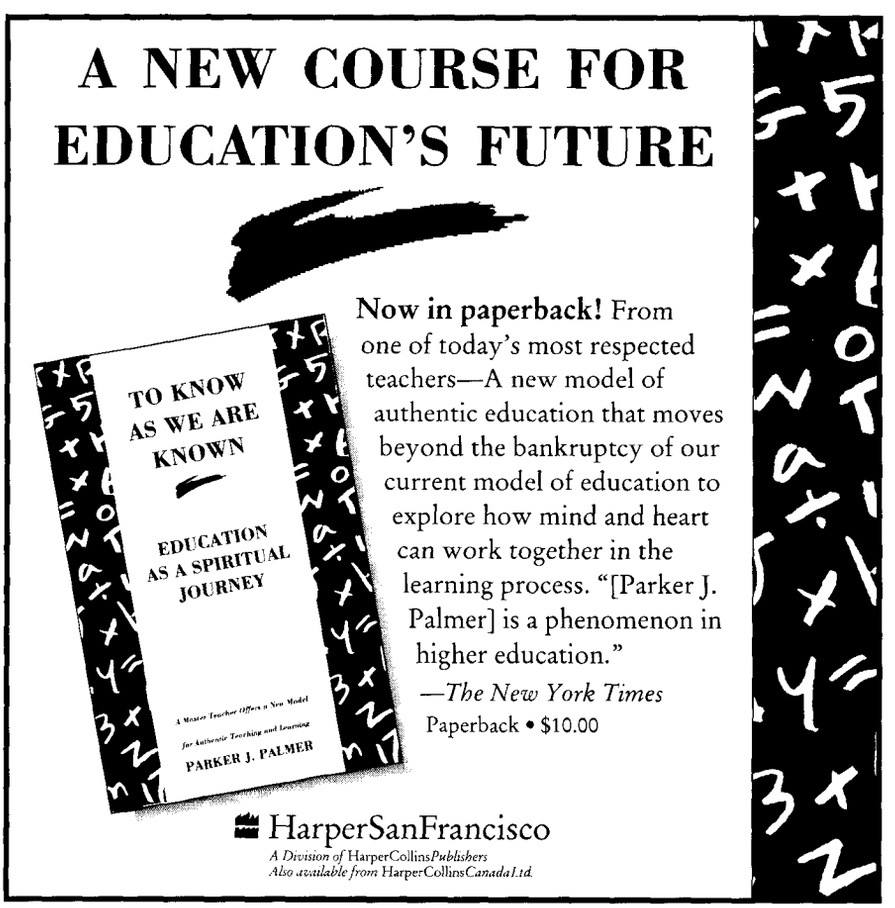
The fantasy: poet-novelist Denis Johnson screeches up to Flannery O'Connor's door in his "Maniac Drifter"-emblazoned sports car; they head off to noon Mass followed by comic, wild, and satisfying conversation. The reality: Denis Johnson has been carrying on an edgy romance with Catholicism and O'Connor ever since the demonic rapist Ned Higher-and-Higher appeared in his first novel, *Angels*, to upstage in a sense O'Connor's malevolent violet-eyed stranger from *The Violent Bear It Away*.

Johnson's most recent book, *Jesus' Son*, owes much to O'Connor's spiritual vocation for the grotesque. The kinds of Catholic images that dominated his fourth novel, *Resuscitation of a Hanged Man*, reemerge here. These sacramental images both hover at the edge of the parodic and are genuinely moving, as when rosary-clutching prolife demonstrators in one story anoint the narrator with holy water as he emerges from an abortion clinic fleeing "the canceled life dreaming after" him: "and I didn't feel a thing. Not for many years."

Johnson is an unsparing, comic, and spiritual writer who has long been chronicling the drifters, desperate, addicts, and survivors of America. *Jesus' Son*, billed as a collection of short stories, is a series of eleven hallucinatory episodes, or stations of the cross (as James McManus called them in the *New York Times Book Review*), narrated by a heroin addict whom Johnson denominates "Jesus' Son," after rock-poet Lou Reed's song, "Heroin": "When I'm rushing on my run/ And I feel just like Jesus' Son." The book's loosely connected drunkalogue ends with the narrator's fragile recovery among the mad, deformed, and outcast of a rest home.

Where O'Connor writes from certitude, the spiritual energy of Johnson's writing emerges from his incertitude. His doubt is generous and his art values the forgiveness that comes from not knowing the meaning of things. In a rare interview (*Ironwood*, Spring 1985), Johnson, raised in an agnostic household, talks about how temporality opened up a spiritual life for him. After learning that the paper on which his poems were printed would last 600 years, Johnson began to think about the future audience understanding and forgiving his characters in a way he could not. That distant audience increasingly became identified with God: "this perception became a real blessing for me" that "we are being looked down on, and understood, and forgiven even though we may fail."

The power and strangeness of Johnson's storytelling stem from his confidence that the world is saturated with inexplicable meanings that are understood and judged outside this world: "What appears to be is actually happening. This is the real world, and very likely all there is, but it has tremendous meaning." Johnson nei-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ther professes to know nor, in his fiction, desires to sort out those meanings; it is this passive hopefulness that makes the writing both disturbing and consoling.

Johnson's narrator reflects his stance. Gifted at seeing into the future, the narrator can do nothing to change what he sees coming. At times his addiction seems symptomatic of his inability to care, at other times the necessary antidote to the pain caused by his perception. Johnson won't let us decide whether this narrator is a brutal drifter and indifferent chronicler of the violence he keeps surviving—car crashes, knifings, shootings, and overdoses—or whether he is an angel, like those in the movie *Wings of Desire*, who limits his consciousness in order to alleviate the pain of absolute perception. He is both.

Time is the medium of grace for Johnson and the temporality of his narrative is fluid. The narrator feels a car crash before it happens, feels the holy water years later. He never tells a linear tale. His companion Jack Hotel dies of an overdose in one story and appears alive, smoking heroin, in the next. This hallucinatory quality is both offset and sharpened by precise and weirdly comic descriptions and dialogues, as when the narrator's hospital roommate, shot in the face by his wife, instructs him: "Talk into my bullet hole. Tell me I'm fine."

Johnson, a former heroin and alcohol addict, deftly conveys both the sharpening effects of drugs and the dreamy lassitude they produce. As he brings his narrator into a shaky recovery, Johnson suggests that sobriety renders the world less spectacular (the narrator no longer sees angels or hears cotton balls talk) and more accommodating to reflection. This shift toward grasping the magnificence of the ordinary comes in the final story, "Beverly Home," when the narrator, standing outside the window of a Mennonite woman he has been peeping at for weeks, witnesses the extraordinary but unspectacular act of her husband's remorse and her forgiveness expressed in the washing of her feet. Johnson brilliantly combines the narrator's peeping Tom pleasure watching her undressing her feet with his deep awe for this revelation of love. These stories are powerful because Johnson is true to the narrator's multiple desires, his lust as well as his thirst for meaning and for love.

William Blake famously said that Milton was of the devil's party without knowing it; novelist John Hawkes repeated the charge to an outraged Flannery O'Connor. With *Jesus' Son*, Johnson gives us a narrator who is of God's party without knowing it. The "Maniac Drifter" whizzes by O'Connor's Milledgeville, Georgia, with a spiritual longing and narrative power born of hope and doubt. □

HIS POEMS WERE THEIR CHILDREN

THE GONNE-YEATS LETTERS: 1893-1938
Edited with introductions by Anna MacBride White and A. Norman Jeffares
W.W. Norton, $35, 456 pp.

Elizabeth Shannon

This is the complete surviving correspondence between the Irish patriot and stunningly beautiful Maud Gonne and William Butler Yeats. Their often-stormy relationship provided Yeats with the great passion of his life and the inspiration for much of his poetry. Gonne found in Yeats her best friend, supporter, defender, and her "spiritual husband."

One of the many tragedies of the Irish Civil War was the destruction of most of Yeats's letters to Gonne before 1923. Irish Free State soldiers who supported the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 raided Gonne's home, took many of Yeats's letters, and later burned them. Others Gonne did not keep for fear of reprisals since they contained material about her political activities. This volume, edited and with introductions by Anna MacBride White, Gonne's granddaughter, and A. Norman Jeffares, gives us the correspondence with clear end notes and valuable commentary throughout.

"Beloved," Gonne wrote to Yeats in 1908, "I am glad and proud beyond measure of your love and that it is strong enough and high enough to accept the spiritual love and union I offer...." Although it is likely that they consummated their love during a very brief period, Gonne was always certain that she could never marry "dearest Willie." She had two children during a love affair in France with Lucien Millevoye, and another son during a brief and stormy marriage to an Irish patriot, John MacBride, but she disliked sex and believed that its only purpose was for the creation of children. She knew that she was too strong-willed and independent and too committed to her many political and social causes to be a good wife. She was also intuitive enough to know that Yeats made beautiful poems out of his unhappiness and frustrated desire.

Maud Gonne was born in Aldershot, England, in 1866; her adored father, an English Army officer, brought the family to live in Ireland when his regiment was posted there. He switched his allegiance to the cause of Home Rule for Ireland and imbued Maud with his love of the country and the Irish people. After his untimely death when Maud was nineteen, she devoted the rest of her life to that cause. She acted on two lessons she had learned from her father: "Never be afraid," and "will is a force that can achieve anything."

Yeats and Gonne met in London in 1889. "The troubling of my life began," Yeats wrote after their meeting. He was twenty-three, poor, ambitious, and soon passionately in love with Gonne. Although she did not return his passion, they shared many interests, not only the cause of Irish nationalism. Yeats was fascinated by the occult and mysticism, and he and Gonne shared an attachment to place, a feeling of spirituality emanating from the land. A deep and abiding friendship developed between them, damaged by opposing political views but lasting a lifetime. Since they seldom lived in the same city, their correspondence was their lifeline. "She is my innocence, and I her wisdom," Yeats wrote.

Gonne was dependent on Yeats for

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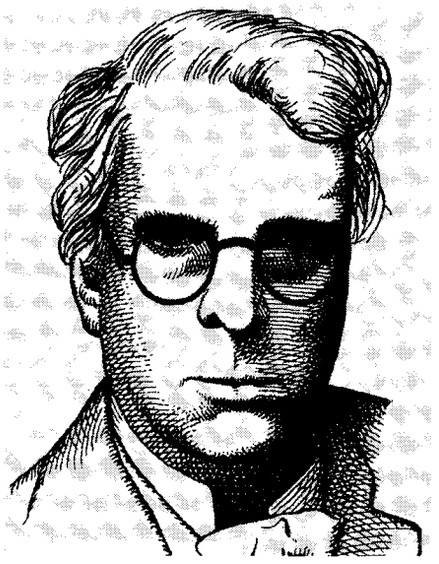

help, advice, and support for her many causes, and he generously gave it, whether it was advice about her daughter Iseult's unhappy marriage, helping arrange her freedom from Hollaway Prison where she was detained with Countess Markiewicz during the Troubles, or unstinting and uncritical sympathy during the days of her divorce.

Her early letters to him are often urgent, filled with details of her current cause, humorless, and frantically rushed. "I am more busy than I can tell you. Domestic worries, Irish delegation, Transvaal volunteer returns, etc., etc. Will you please get...documents all together in an envelope and have them ready...hoping to hear from you soon" (1900). Seldom is any personal emotion expressed. "I don't like to talk about myself," she told him once. "Don't try to make me." She had a deep unwillingness to face her inner life, and preferred pouring her energies and imagination into her good causes rather than in establishing intimate personal relationships.

In 1903, Yeats wrote a long and impassioned letter to Gonne trying to dissuade her from marrying John MacBride. If she had listened to his sound advice, she would have saved herself from a marriage made violent and ugly by alcoholism which ended in divorce and greatly damaged Gonne's reputation. The only good thing to come of the marriage was her beloved son, Sean, who later became an Irish patriot, statesman, and tireless worker for social justice. Sean MacBride won the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1974, fifty-one years after Yeats received it for literature.

Despite the stress, tensions, and frustrations of their relationship, Gonne also had Yeats's best interests at heart, encouraging him, giving him valuable criticism when she felt he needed it, and expressing gratitude for the role she played in his life: "I like the poems so much...the slight alterations are improvements I think...there is a danger of my growing very vain when I think of these beautiful things created for me—thank you."

Because of Yeats's towering reputation and genius, Maud Gonne's reputation has been marginalized in history. Because she was a woman, she never attained official positions for the many functions she performed leading up to and during the war of Irish independence. Her services to the cause of social justice are often given the status of "do-gooding," rather than serious accomplishments. She is also thought of as a cold and unfeeling woman who led poor William Butler Yeats by the nose, using him when she needed him, discarding him when she didn't. Both these perceptions are wrong. Although always frustrated by Gonne's refusals of marriage, Yeats's work steadily gained in stature throughout the English-speaking world; his poetry, his theater accomplishments, and later his role as a senator in the new Irish Free State, brought him accolades and the pleasures of fame and success. He was not always pining after Gonne, but had several love affairs before he finally met and married Georgie Hyde Lees, with whom he had a long, loving, and stable marriage and two children: "My wife is a perfect wife, kind, wise, and unselfish...she has made my life serene and full of order."

After his marriage, and during the years of the establishment of the Irish Free State, Yeats and Gonne drifted apart. She had become a Catholic upon her marriage to MacBride, and she often accused Yeats of being strongly anti-Catholic. They were on opposite sides politically, he becoming more and more conservative and finding her extreme Republicanism and support of violence in the cause of freedom annoying and finally boring. Her convictions didn't, after all, coincide with his own opinions, and he always had difficulty in adjusting to the idea of a woman holding opinions of her own. She never forgave him for serving in the senate of the new Irish Free State and voting for legislation that allowed her son Sean to be imprisoned without trial.

In 1938, five months before his death, Yeats wrote to Gonne: "I want you...to come here to tea at 4:30...a motor will call

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"I like the authors' clear insights into Teresa from a psychological point of view. The authors not only know about Teresa but, more significantly, 'know' her in an empathetic mode. Thus the writing is smooth, never strained, as they call upon the examples of other spiritual men and women whose lives shed light on Teresa's. Their familiarity with psychology translates into eminently readable prose." — Mary E. Giles, California State University, Sacramento

272 pp • $16.95 pb • ISBN 0-7914-1412-2

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for you at 4....I have wanted to see you for a long time but...." She went, and it was the last time she saw him. He was writing poetry up until the time he died.

Several years after his death, Gonne wrote to a friend: "Politics had separated us for quite a long while...neither wanted to see the other, but at the last we had come together."

"The world will thank me for not marrying you," Gonne once told Yeats after one of his many proposals. "Our children were your poems of which I was the father sowing the unrest and storm which made them possible and you the mother who brought them forth in suffering and in the highest beauty, and our children had wings...." □

APOSTLE FOR JUSTICE

ORGANIZED LABOR AND THE CHURCH
Reflections of a "Labor Priest"
Msgr. George G. Higgins with William Bole
Paulist Press, $12.95 (paper), 245 pp.

THE CIO'S LEFT-LED UNIONS
Steve Rosswurm, editor
Rutgers University Press, $17 (paper), 250 pp.

John C. Cort

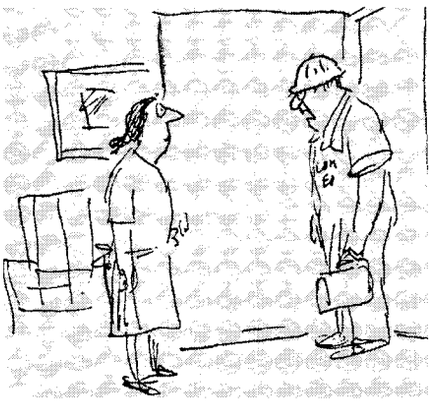
Let us beat about no bushes. Monsignor Higgins has given us a book that is the best thing ever written on the subject and should be required reading in every Catholic seminary in the U.S.A., as well as a mandatory text in every Catholic college course in social ethics or moral theology.

Of making many books on Catholic social teaching there is no end. Few of them reveal a sense of what really happens in the factory or the office, on the street or the picket line. This book is different. It is Catholic social teaching *plus* personal memoir of a man who for fifty years has been at the center of the church's concern for labor and labor's concern for justice *plus* labor history *plus* profiles of major labor leaders *plus* a no-holds-barred account of the major strikes and disputes in which the church and Father Higgins have been involved, sometimes with him on the workers' side against the heads of Catholic schools and hospitals.

In a chapter titled "Practicing What We Preach," Higgins documents some outrageous campaigns by Catholic schools, universities, and hospitals to prevent the organization of their employees into bona fide unions, in carefree disregard of a hundred years of the church's support of the right to organize. Most of the hospitals, the worst offenders, are run by orders of religious women independent of the bishops in whose jurisdiction they are located.

Higgins climaxes this section by quoting a talk he sometimes gives to groups of sisters: "You're asking for leadership in the church. Well, you've got the leadership in the hospital field, and you're not doing much with it. Here's a chance to really step forward and show us how to do something better."

One can't applaud the split infinitive, but any friend of justice and a larger role for women in the church must applaud this



"What kind of day did I have? More than six million five hundred kilowatts were used this afternoon. That's *the kind of day I had!"*

two-pronged appeal to put our own house in order before we get too self-righteous about the sins of others.

Higgins pays tribute to Cardinal John O'Connor of New York, who not only ordered the Catholic hospitals in that city to break away from the anti-union hospital association and sign a separate agreement with the union, but was outspoken in public testimony in favor of legislation to outlaw the permanent replacement of strikers. This is a hot issue right now on the labor front in the halls of Congress.

Higgins writes, "I would argue that the cardinal is the best friend organized labor has had in the American Catholic hierarchy in recent years."

The book makes a powerful case for a major overhaul of U.S. labor laws that are contributing to a partly successful effort by U.S. employers to destroy the labor movement. Other than South Africa, the U.S. is the only industrial country whose employers, in the main, have not abandoned the dream of operating in a totally non-union environment. They complain about the adversarial attitude of the unions, but the unions' adversarial attitude, if any, is love-and-kisses compared with their own.

There was a time—in the thirties and forties, mainly—when many Catholics, lay and clerical, found the labor movement an exciting place to demonstrate their Christian commitment to justice. Those were the glory days, when the workers—many of them our fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters—were fighting for their most basic rights. Times have changed. Today, Andrew Greeley notes, Catholics are the most affluent gentile group in the U.S. But look again. Many of our fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters are once again fighting for their most basic rights. The rich grow richer, the poor and middle class poorer. Higgins notes that the average CEO income in 1988 was $2,023,285, some ninety-two times the average factory worker's earnings. Millions are earning nothing, unemployed.

Blacks, Hispanics, Asians are even worse off than the whites. It is time once again that Christians looked to the labor movement for a place to prove that their love of justice is not a sometime thing. Higgins has done a noble service in telling us why.

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The CIO's Left-Led Unions also has much to say about organized labor, the Catholic church, and various labor leaders. But what it has to say is very different from the Higgins book. On the first page, the editor, Steve Rosswurm, who writes several of the essays, characterizes Philip Murray, head of the CIO, as "obscenely wrongheaded." "Obscene" is defined as "deeply offensive to morality or decency," and that characterization of Murray struck this reviewer as deeply offensive to both morality *and* decency.

Anyone who was actually in the CIO in the thirties and forties and knew anything about Murray and was not under the baleful influence of the Stalinists, will tell you that Philip Murray was one of the most decent, moral, and effective labor leaders that ever lived. As George Higgins testifies.

As for "wrongheaded," Rosswurm wants us to believe that the expulsion of the Communist-led unions from the CIO in 1949 was a terrible mistake that is responsible for all the bad things that have happened to the labor movement since then. Not only that, but he thinks the Catholic church in general and the ACTU (Association of Catholic Trade Unionists) in particular should be ashamed of themselves because they not only opposed Communists in the CIO, but, after 1945, abandoned whatever progressive policies they had had and made anticommunism their "sole focus."

First of all, this latter charge, still made in some academic circles, is a total lie, falsehood, or misstatement, depending on the knowledge or intent of the person who repeats it. Higgins's work with the U.S. bishops and the AFL-CIO, the farm workers, and a hundred other beleaguered unions should be enough to refute it as far as the church is concerned. As to the ACTU, this reviewer can testify that it is also a total falsehood since he spent eighteen years of full- and part-time work for ACTU, from its founding in 1937 to about 1955. Even after 1945, anticommunism remained a minor part of ACTU's overall focus, which was still consistently pro-union and pro-Catholic.

From Stalinists we expect this kind of abuse, but Rosswurm is no Stalinist. A young historian, he started his academic career and learned his biases when anticommunism was politically incorrect. Then, about 1988, anticommunism became politically correct. There was just too much hard evidence about the failures of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. So Rosswurm tries to have it both ways. He is honest enough to admit that the Communists in the CIO displayed "a slavish loyalty to the Soviet Union" and that the Soviet Union and its satellites were "brutally authoritarian." And as a Catholic himself he is also honest enough to concede that the Stalinists' "hostility toward religion...antagonized Catholic working people, who had good reason to be anti-Communist."

Since the ACTU was composed of Catholic working people, it follows logically that they had good reason to be anti-Communist and in no mood to be controlled by leaders with "a slavish loyalty" to a "brutally authoritarian Soviet Union."

For Rosswurm, Marxism is still politically correct and he does not see the connection between Marxism and the fact that the Soviet Union was such a "brutally authoritarian" failure. But setting him straight on that is an exercise too long for this review.

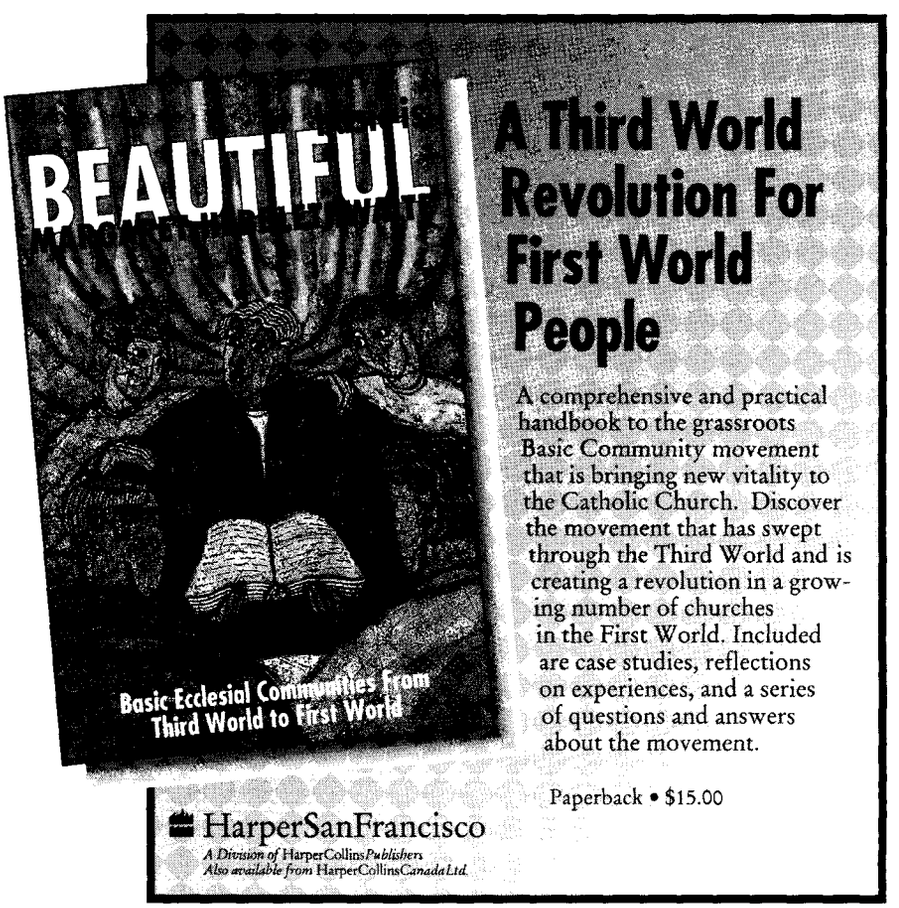
Rosswurm is only one of eight contributors to this book, and their essays are mostly factual accounts of the activity of Communist-led longshoremen, electrical workers, leather, and agricultural workers. Some of these Communists were admirable people. Too bad that (a) they were fatally mistaken, and (b) more of those who were and are right did not, and do not, emulate their zeal and their dedication. □

REVIEWERS

DARIA DONNELLY *teaches literature at Boston University.*

ELIZABETH SHANNON, *a frequent* Commonweal *contributor, is the author of* I Am of Ireland *(Little, Brown). She lives in Brookline, Massachusetts.*

JOHN C. CORT *is a Boston-area writer, author of* Christian Socialism *(Orbis), and contributor to* John Courtney Murray and the American Civil Conversation *(Eerdmans).*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Matters spiritual

Lawrence S. Cunningham

Katz's volume is the third he has edited and contributed to over the past fifteen years. *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (1978) argued strenuously that all mystical experience is mediated experience (religious and cultural) and, as a consequence, those that hold for the fundamental sameness in mysticism (e.g., the *philosophia perennis*) are wrong. In *Mysticism and Religious Traditions* (1983), Katz (and his contributors) set out to demolish the common perception that mystics are, of necessity or by vocation, peripheral to religious traditions as well as the object of suspicion. Both of these volumes, especially the first one, have generated a good deal of (healthy) learned discussion.

Mysticism and Language, *edited by Steven T. Katz, Oxford University Press, $38, 262 pp.*

This present collection takes up the issue of the use of language in the mystical tradition. A moment's reflection will show how complex a subject this is. How, for instance, does one create a language about an experience which is generally described as ineffable? How does one analyze the use of the Zen *koan* which is a linguistic device designed precisely to get beyond language? What are the uses of language in the rich tradition of Jewish mysticism which focuses, at least among some, on the mystic penetration of texts, words, and even letters? What are we to make of the intensely erotic language of certain mystical traditions?

These and cognate issues are raised and discussed by some premier scholars in the field. This collection offers reflection on Jewish mysticism (Moshe Idel); on love language in Christian and Jewish mysticism (Bernard McGinn); on Buddhist and Christian texts (Ninian Smart); on Chan/Zen Buddhism (Bernard Faure); etc. Such essays are marked by a serious control of the literature and a rigorous reading of the textual tradition. Katz's opening essay—a kind of overview of the issues involved in the relationship of language and mysticism—sets the stage for the more particular studies mentioned above. It also provides openings for further research.

The particular merit of the series is to set out, with rigor, a serious consideration of mysticism that is both philosophically and historically sophisticated. These volumes are not for the casual browser. Not everyone in the field of mysticism and spirituality is a "Katzian," but no person, serious about mysticism, can remain ignorant of the agenda that these volumes propose. For that reason alone, the trilogy in general and this volume in particular are welcome.

I had the good fortune of reading Burton-Christie while teaching a course on Christian spirituality. It was a valuable resource which I mined for its many insights into the early development of monastic faith and practice. Readers of Augustine's *Confessions* will remember how influential Athanasius's *Life of Antony* was for him and those about him. Along with that paradigmatic *vita* we also possess a vast collection of "sayings" from the early desert dwellers of the late fourth century (mainly Coptic-speaking peasants) who went into the wilderness to serve God through a life of prayer, asceticism, and work. These "sayings" are brief, sometimes almost aphoristic, and, most likely, remembered and handed on by those who received them. Only later were they compiled into the collections which we possess today.

Burton-Christie's study focuses on this issue: how did these early ascetics encounter the Word of God, flesh it out in their lives, and transmit their insights to others; what, in short, was their hermeneutical strategy? How is this reflected in the collection of "sayings" which we have from this period? That they rooted their lives in Scripture is, for Burton-Christie, a given despite the judgment of those (most conspicuously the historian Edward Gibbon in the eighteenth century) who saw the desert ascetics as aberrant Christians at best and fanatical un-Christians at worst. Burton-Christie shows, convincingly to my mind, that they did shape their lives according to a particular way of encountering the Scriptures and, further, when others came to see them seeking a "good word," it was to the Scriptures that they turned in offering spiritual direction to their supplicants.

The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism, *by Douglas Burton-Christie, Oxford University Press, $55, 336 pp.*

His focus on the desert ascetics (who are the ancestors of the monastic tradition for both the Eastern and Western church) reinforces a larger point which I think is crucial for Christian spirituality, to wit, that it may be seen as a tradition seeking to work out the implications of certain *topoi* in the Bible. There is much truth in Gerhart Ebeling's assertion that the history of Christianity is the history of biblical interpretation. The desert ascetics (fathers and mothers, let it be noted) fastened on the "not-yet" of eschatological yearning, the need for compunction (*penthos*), the humble life of Christ, the aspiration for a "purity of heart," and the demands of the great com-

LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM, *professor and chair of the Department of Theology at the University of Notre Dame, is editing the 1956-60 personal notebooks of Thomas Merton for publication.*

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mandment of love of God and neighbor.

Burton-Christie teases out these and other themes in exacting detail. His book, then, makes a wonderful companion to the easily available translation of the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* like that translated by Benedicta Ward for Cistercian Publications. *The Word in the Desert* is a major work of scholarship in early Christian spirituality; it deserves a close reading by anyone in the field. I have profited much from it.

Wilken is one of this country's most distinguished patristics scholars. His new book on the rise and significance of the Holy Land in both the imagination and history of Christians is a superbly written and researched piece of historical scholarship. Wilken has a historical thesis to present and a conclusion to draw. The thesis, simply put, is this: Christians have lived in Palestine from the beginning of Christianity but, roughly beginning in the fourth century, the idea rose that the land in general and Jerusalem in particular was a holy *Christian* place that was not only a destination for pilgrims (there were many of them) but a place to live.

In the "Golden Age" of Byzantine Christianity (from, roughly, the fourth to the seventh century), the population of Jerusalem rose from 15,000 to nearly

The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought, *by Robert L. Wilken, Yale University Press, $35, 355 pp.*

50,000. Its Christian patriarch, Wilken observes, could have well challenged the authority of the See of Rome had it not been for the subsequent Islamic conquest. Archaeologists have traced over five hundred Byzantine churches from the Negev north while the Judean desert was dotted with monastic establishments, at least one of which (Mar Saba) exists to this day. Jews, of course, were still a continuing presence but their numbers in Jerusalem were slight. More importantly, from Wilken's perspective, the *idea* of the sacredness of the land among Christians changed from a metaphorical notion of the land to an exigent belief that this was Christian territory with a profound theological significance.

This would all end, of course, with, first the Sassanid (Persian) invasion of Byzantine Palestine and the far more permanent conquerors of Islam. Wilken ends his story with that invasion but, as he astringently notes, the belief in the Christian notion of the Holy Land was deep-rooted and it would blossom, terribly, with the rise of the crusading spirit in the Romanesque period of the medieval West.

That, in brief, is Wilken's story (an inadequate summary of his deeply rich historical narrative) but here is his conclusion: Christianity's "homeland is the Middle East, and continuity with its past is dependent on the Christians who continue to live in that land in which the faith is native." Otherwise, Wilken fears, the Christian presence in present-day Israel will become a museum piece and relic (as it is, say, in present-day Istanbul, where the patriarch of Constantinople keeps a flickering presence alive), and, as a consequence, a rich part of the Christian experience will be lost.

Such a scenario could well play out. Christian Arabs today find themselves squeezed by the militancy of Islam and the expansionism of Israel; many Palestinian Christians already find themselves in the diaspora. According to many thoughtful people, and Wilken would be one of them, that is not a good thing. However, it is a tragic reality.

The estimable Paulist series Classics of Western Spirituality continues to issue excellent editions. The best seller of the series is Julian of Norwich's *Showings*. Her wonderful English prose, her attention to feminine language, and her great sense of love and compassion all help to explain why this fourteenth-century English recluse should be a contemporary best seller. It is a work that I always have on my reading list for students when my annual course on Christian spirituality comes around.

It should come as no surprise, then, that Julian's book should also spawn an enormous secondary literature (some of which I have noted in this column previously). Bradley's volume is a welcome addition to that literature. A longtime student of medieval spirituality (she is one of the founders of the journal *Mystics Quarterly*), this work sums up her long familiarity with Julian's writings. She writes in a straightforward and engaging fashion with the

Julian's Way: A Practical Commentary on Julian of Norwich, *by Ritamary Bradley, HarperCollins, $14, 231 pp.*

hope, as she says, that her book might provide a student of Julian with a "practical" guide as they read the *Showings*. I think she does just that and, as a consequence, can recommend her briskly written work as a good first entry into Julian's writings.

What I most admire is Bradley's ability to contextualize Julian's writings by reference not only to the religious culture from which she springs but also her attention to

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the metaphors drawn from her life in late medieval Norwich. Bradley pays attention to Julian's use of clothing and knitting metaphors, to her reactions to the art of the period, and to her fresh use of language.

Bradley rightly observes that Julian did not write for a spiritually elite audience (as did, for example, the *Cloud* author) but for those whom she called her "even-Christians," the ordinary folks who came to her for a "good word." We know that they did come to her because Margery Kempe tells us so in her own autobiography. Bradley is especially good in explaining how Julian saw herself as a teacher (and, I would say, spiritual director) despite a rather hefty tradition warning women against undertaking such duties. Julian's favorite themes—the goodness of creation, the notion of God and Christ as Mother, the "nothingness of sin," that "all things will be well" (a phrase immortalized in Eliot's *Four Quartets*), the passion of Christ—all get sensibly treated in this very fine little book which ends with a (too) short bibliography and an index.

Anyone who wishes to truly understand Julian must be conversant with a small body of literature, published more than a century before Julian's day, destined for anchoresses in England. Unlike hermits who sought out inaccessible rural retreats, anchoresses lived in towns and cities, in a small house attached to a church (called an anchorhold) where they lived a life of prayer and penance. Ceremonies of enclosure for such penitents frequently appealed to the metaphors of solitary confinement or prison to describe their lives. Interestingly, this rather grim language existed in tension with other metaphors, drawn mainly from *The Song of Songs*, which described the anchorhold as a "bower" or a "garden" or a "bridal chamber."

Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works, *edited and translated by Anne Savage and Steven Watson, Paulist, $22.95, 487 pp.*

Savage and Watson have translated (from Medieval English) the contents of the so-called "Titus Manuscript," an anthology of anchoritic spirituality copied in a Franciscan provenance in the first half of the thirteenth century. The most famous of the treatises in this volume is the *Ancrene Wisse*—a rule for recluses composed, it is believed, by a learned canon. The Titus manuscript also contains some other short works: "The Soul's Keeping" (*Sawles Warde*), "Holy Maidenhood," "The Wooing of Our Lord," and a hagiographical treatise called "St. Katherine." Appendices in this volume also reproduce some other works from the same period which do not appear in the Titus manuscript.

These works are much earlier than Julian's *Showings*, nonetheless they provide a context for Julian's life and shed much light on her writings. As I read the *Ancrene Wisse* (*AW*), for example, I could see more clearly what Bradley meant by the limits imposed on these female ascetics with respect to teaching. Julian's great vision of the Crucified Lord, which is part of her opening chapters, made even more sense to me as I read the passage in the *AW* which recommended the power of a prayer said before the "great crucifix" (which evidently referred to the one over the main altar of the church that the recluse could see through her "church window"). Bradley's analysis of Julian's clothing and knitting metaphors came alive in those pages of the *AW* where the legitimate occupations of the anchoress are described (sewing for the poor and for the church is recommended).

What makes this volume so rich is both its generous notes (running to nearly 100 pages), its index of scriptural and patristic citations, valuable appendices (including some wonderful medieval prayers to Our Lady), and a quite adequate general index. The treatises are prefaced with some extremely helpful introductory notes, including an illuminating discussion of translation problems when scholars attempt to transpose Medieval English dialect into contemporary speech. This volume, then, both in its own right and as a resource for understanding Julian is invaluable. Once again, we are much in the debt of Paulist Press for giving us such good value. □

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

Limbaugh presents the most compelling arguments against abortion, condom distribution, the gay lifestyle, extreme feminism, extreme environmentalists, extreme animal rights proponents, etc., that appear anywhere in the media. As a Catholic I am proud to be a "ditto head" supporter of Rush Limbaugh. His book has been on the *New York Times* bestseller list for thirty-seven weeks, and his radio show is carried by over 500 stations nationwide. Frank McConnell and other "Catholic" writers better pay attention!

RAYMOND P. GAUER

Stereotyping Paglia

Fairbanks, Alaska

To the Editors: Christopher Thomas's review of Camille Paglia's *Sex, Art and the American Culture* certainly made for robust reading. Though I agree with many of his points, I am not convinced that Paglia, as Thomas suggests, is bound by stereotypes because she is single and does not have "boys of her own to raise to test against her theories." One of Thomas's own stereotypes seems to be that single women don't have a clue about what it's like to be with children. Females in large families like Paglia's spend much of their growing-up years mothering their younger siblings, nieces, nephews, and cousins. If Paglia changed as many diapers, rocked as many babies, and helped care for and love as many siblings as I had by the time I left the family home, she may well have gained a deep understanding of life. NANCY WITTE

Watch your diet

Fresno, Calif.

To the Editors: Thank you for your great service to the church in preparing us for the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [March 12, May 7]. Two articles in the "Responses" [May 7] raise some interesting issues regarding how this text will be received. One reviewer writes: "I am grateful [to the authors of the *Catechism*] for providing a thorough-

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ly biblical exposition," while another response laments "how completely this catechism ignores the results of critical biblical scholarship."

Such differing perspectives on the same issue indicate that many readers will do *ei*segesis rather than *ex*egesis of this compendium of the faith. That may be healthy and completely consistent with the traditional diversity under the Catholic umbrella. It cannot be in accord, however, with the evident intentions of the promoters of this work to codify, unify, and petrify a monolithic Catholic dogma for the twenty-first century.

Fortunately, as has been pointed out, turning the letter of church teaching into a living witness remains the challenge, and the expertise, of the post-Vatican II church. What has been termed "buffet Catholicism" will probably continue to be practiced. Sensitive pastors will have the wisdom to guide people to choose those dishes that will provide healthy nourishment for the body of Christ.

(REV.) DAVID J. NORRIS

May his tribe increase

Bayside Hills, N.Y.

To the Editors: May I offer my sincere congratulations and support to Bishop Kenneth Untener and to *Commonweal* for his splendid article, "*Humanae vitae*: What Has It Done to Us?" [June 18]. It takes a special courage to speak the truth when those in charge have indicated time after time that they don't want to hear it. In spite of the certain loss of further advancement in the church as well as of the harsh criticism he will undoubtedly receive from some of his fellow bishops, Bishop Untener has asked for open discussion of the church's present teaching on birth control.

This is a matter of great consequence. In my twenty years as parish priest and subsequent twenty-seven years as a psychological counselor and spiritual director, I've been privileged to share the heartaches and suffering of thousands of sincere Catholics—clergy, religious, and laity—who have felt betrayed by the Vatican's refusal even to dialogue on issues such a birth control and mandatory celibacy—issues that have momentous importance in their lives.

I pray that the courage of Bishop Untener will become infectious among the other members of our hierarchy.

(REV.) JAMES E. SULLIVAN

The writer is director emeritus of the Religious Consultation Center, Diocese of Brooklyn.

Where's the middle?

Bassett, Neb.

To the Editors: I find it interesting that of the 200-plus bishops you might have asked to assess the effects of *Humanae vitae*, you chose the bishop of Saginaw. Weren't exactly looking for a middle-of-the-road opinion, were you? MARK GRONCESKI

Credibility gap

Detroit, Mich.

To the Editors: Thank God for bishops like Kenneth Untener. His article brings into focus what so many of us know but so few church leaders seem able to measure: the growing gap of credibility between our hierarchy and the rest of us. What is most troubling is the question whether the bishops do in fact hear us but, unlike Bishop Untener, lack courage to do anything about it.

(REV. MSGR.) FRANCIS X. CANFIELD

More needed

Las Vegas, Nev.

To the Editors: Bishop Untener's reflections on the pastoral consequences of *Humanae vitae* were wonderfully interesting but did not go far enough. Yes, as he says, "people cynically dismiss us [the bishops of the United States] as dissemblers." I think many people do—and ought to. Most bishops have repeatedly been dissemblers.

When *Humanae vitae* cannot be publicly discussed in our church, we have to admit, if only to ourselves, that the men who are commissioned by Christ to lead us are pastorally illiterate. When the church as institution refuses to listen to its laity, we see that it does not even recognize the major problems it has that it can solve only through us.

H. CARROLL SHEEHY, JR.

A liberating encyclical

San Antonio, Tex.

To the Editors: I appreciate Bishop Untener's candor and courage. I would like to add, however, that *Humanae vitae* has been very liberating for me and perhaps for many other Catholics. Before the encyclical was published, I did not think seriously about moral and doctrinal issues; I was a good pray-pay-and-obey Catholic. Shocked and dismayed that the encyclical became a test of loyalty, I now study, discuss, and pray over such issues. I feel I have spiritually grown by rejecting the robotic spiritual position I was accustomed to. I've gained the courage to disagree, meantime hoping that the whole concept of church authority will some day be reevaluated. A Protestant friend said, "I'm getting spiritually fed by liberated Catholics more than by anyone else." Thank you, *Humanae vitae.*

EDWARD ALCOTT

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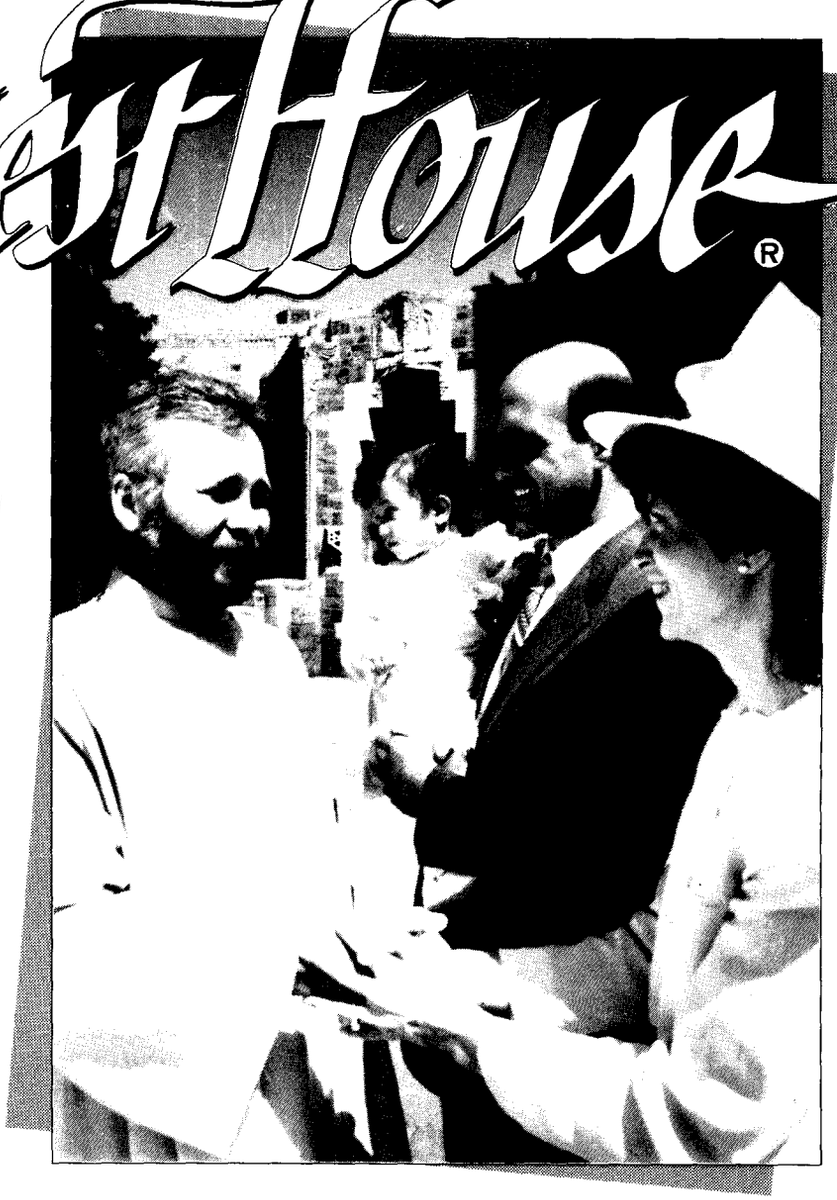

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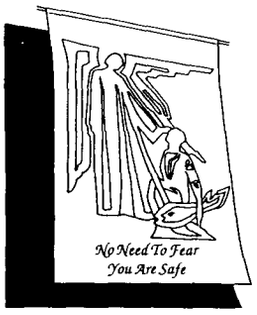

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